

"THE MAGAZINE THAT DARES TO BE LAME!"

THAT'S A GOOD GIRL...
WHEN YER DONE,
GIT ME ANOTHER
BEER, WILL YA
BABE?

MMEFF

ADULTS

Deluxe
INTRODUCTORY
ISSUE

Fan Mail



Donnie,

No, I won't read this. It's filth. You don't have to ask me. I know my son and I know this is filth. Not that he would do anything like this on his own. You see that. You must see that. I've told everyone. We sent him to the best schools. There was Notre Dame and then law school at Wake Forest. He had a fine education but he just lets people take advantage of him. He just wants people to like him and they know that and they take advantage of him because he just wants to be liked. This magazine or whatever you want to call it proves that. He's just a puppet for that, that thing. Unnnhnnh, when I think about him, unnnhnnh, Jerry. Jerry Huddleston. It was his idea to put out this pornography. He was jealous of my Donnie. He saw he had a happy marriage and a fine career in the government as a trademark lawyer. And it just killed him. It ate at him. So he had to destroy Donnie and he convinces him to do this. Look at it. This is writing? My son does not use words like this. I didn't raise him this way. Why I can remember the time that thing, Jerry said the word "ass" in my house. In my house! Well, things were never, we just finally had to refuse, to just tell him, he was no longer welcome. Yes, I realize it was something of a hardship on my Donnie. Jerry was his best friend after all, but we had to do something. This animal had my son dressing in leather jackets and wearing sunglasses at night. I noticed he never had a leather jacket. Oh no! He always looked just right. That was why he got the girls. Donnie was just a sidekick. Jerry could say, "Look at the jerk. I keep him around for laughs." Jerry would get a date and Donnie would have to go home alone. Finally he got away from him for awhile and things got better. With Donnie and the family I mean. Then sometimes Donnie would, well, family relations became strained between Donnie and us. And I knew it was Jerry. Jerry would call. Jerry would write. And just like that, Donnie and

the family would be fighting. Do you know he tried to talk Donnie out of going to his law school graduation? Yes he did. The proudest day of his life and he didn't want to go. Never said anything about not wanting to go, until Jerry paid him a visit. Ask either of them. They'll tell you. It's the truth. Now he wants to publish a magazine. It could have been so classy. Donnie was an English and a philosophy major you know. Yes, a double major. Oh, yes and he studied the violin for twelve years. So you see he could have written about Dickens and Mozart, well Beethoven actually, Beethoven is Donnie's favorite. But look at what Jerry has made him do. He's writing about filth and perversion and using this language. Well, it breaks my heart. I just wish we were on speaking terms so I could tell him how he was breaking my heart. Yes, Donnie that's what I tell my friends: that I am ashamed of my son.

Your mother
(or did you forget you had one)

Son,

I think your mother is perfectly justified in her sentiments. I would just like to add that if it wasn't for Jerry you would have become a fine figure of a man. Then you could have been a decent softball player and your brother wouldn't have had to yell at you in front of the other players. Oh, how it pained me to see you so humiliated. But these were boys with home run power. And you, well, you were never more than a place hitter. But Jerry told you that you didn't have to work and I watched your average drop. Your fielding got worse too. Oh I know you said something about your eyes deteriorating, but you could never convince me it was anything other than Jerry. That one good year you had, wasn't Jerry in Japan? Yes, I'm sure he was. He's back now, as I am well aware. And the result? It's a kind of perversion. Just like that picture you have that Jerry painted

that's hanging in your room. Of you and that girl that isn't even your wife. It's pornography. Everything he does, Jerry, is pornography. He wants to drive you against the family and he's using this magazine as a way to do it. I know my son and I know he does not like perversion. Let Jerry and the pornographers have this magazine and you forget about it. Maybe we'll take you down to the batting cage. You'll get your swing back. And you're stronger with this karate thing. It will come. When your brother sees you swing, he'll be begging for you to play for him again. He probably won't even make you catch. So what do you say? Leave Jerry to the filth he comes from.

Sincerely,
(I'll always be)
Your Father

Donnie,

What are you doing to your mother? What are you doing to your mother? Have you any idea? Do you have any idea? Do you? Do you? What are you doing to her? Just what are you doing to her?

What are you doing to her? You have no idea. You have no idea.

You just have no idea. What you are doing to your mother. What you are doing? I raised her, I know what you are doing to her.

Your Grandmother

Your dead man. Your dead. You think you can do this to our family. Your dead. I'm gonna kick your ass. I'm not afraid of this karate shit. Your a pussy and your magazine sucks.

Fuck you,
Your brother, man

BRUTARIAN

VOLUME ONE, NUMBER ONE

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SWINE BY JARSON DYSZRAK AND **MORE!**



"THERE ARE, (THERE ARE EVERY -
WHERE AND ALWAYS,) TWO DIFF -
ERENT ORDERS OF ART. THERE
IS THE ART EVERYONE IS USED TO -
POLISHED OR PERFECT ART, BAPTIZED
ACCORDING TO THE FASHION OF THE
MOMENT EITHER CLASSIC ART OR
ROMANTIC ART, (OR WHATEVER ONE
LIKES - IT ALWAYS COMES TO THE
SAME THING). AND THEN
THERE IS ALSO, UNTAMED
AND FURTIVE LIKE SOME WILD
CREATURE, **ART BRUTARIAN!**"

(SIC)

FROM "PROSPECTUS AUX AMATEURS DE TOUT GENRE" 1946

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DWAIN ESPER'S PLATFORM

on the **MAKING** and
SHOWING of
MOTION PICTURES

- (1) *Grade films as to their audience suitability before showing: A—Family; B—Adults.*
- (2) *Do not inject off-color sequences into family films.*
- (3) *Keep stars, who are favorites with children, in wholesome pictures.*
- (4) *Eliminate scenes depicting the technic of committing crime.*
- (5) *Eliminate the glorification of promiscuity.*
- (6) *Parents should select the type of picture their children should see, and go with them.*
- (7) *Motion picture appreciation should be made a part of the school curriculum.*



DWAIN ESPER CINEMA'S FORGOTTEN SCUMBAG

By Dom Salemi

One of the more interesting stories in David Friedman's autobiography, *A YOUTH IN BABYLON*, concerns a guy with the strange name of Dwain Esper; a man whom Friedman claims has no peer in the art of con, cinematic or otherwise, which is quite an assertion given the fact that gents like Kroger Babb and Louis Sonney were working the same field.

Friedman's yarn finds Esper in Chicago in the winter of 1956 running a burlesque review in a decrepit, mob-owned theater on skid row. Not only is Esper operating without a rental agreement of any kind, but he is also staging his show without the benefit of union projectionists, stagehands, performers, and musicians, which is tantamount to committing suicide since, as everyone even remotely connected to show business knows, organized labor was and still is run by the guys with colorful names like Johnny Two-Fingers and Sam "Ice Pick" Manzanara.

The union wastes little time getting an agent over to the theater to negotiate a contract with Esper. Their agent, however, turns out not to be some three hundred pound guy named Guido wielding a baseball bat, but a fuzzy-cheeked kid fresh out of law school (the union is trying to clean up their image). Esper, recognizing a mark when he sees one, patiently listens to the kid's pitch and then excuses himself to go to the bathroom. When the door to the ratty office opens a few minutes later, it is not Esper standing in the doorway, but a scantily clad stripper proffering a drink and the promise of intimate encounter. The naive negotiator, thinking he's going to score, takes the drink, drains it in one large gulp, and promptly blacks out.

Awakening several hours later, the kid finds himself on the couch clad only in his underwear. He hasn't been rolled but his clothes are gone and his contract forms have just as mysteriously vanished. Proceeding downstairs to the theater to look for help, our youthful hero is greeted not with kindness and concern but with scorn and derision by both patrons and performers. Enraged and embarrassed, the ardent arbitrator retreats to Esper's office to call in some muscle. . . . only to find the phone's dial securely locked.

Well, to make a long story short, the kid eventually gets out of this house of horrors but only with the aid of a kind-hearted stripper who gives him a raincoat and the admonition not to return. The next day a package is delivered to the union offices. In it are the purloined garments which have been neatly folded in an expensive box. The union, concluding that Esper is obviously insane, decides that the better course of valor is to ignore him.

Esper piqued my curiosity and had me asking myself a number of questions. This lunatic made and distributed films? If he did, he must have made and distributed them by himself because he couldn't have had any friends or anyone even foolish enough to admit they knew him. Or could he? And just how had Esper managed to live as long as he did without having his teeth gouged out with a chisel?

Research revealed that Esper was born in 1893 (some accounts list his birthdate as 1899) and died in his bed at the ripe old age of eighty-nine without a scratch on him. According to Esper, he started in the movie industry making six reel silent westerns but eventually decided that he could make more money by setting up his own film distribution and production company. In making this decision, Esper understood that because he did not have the money to compete with the major studios, he would have to hit the roadshow circuit with exploitation fodder.

Some independents were better than others at working this scam. Nobody however, not even Kroger Babb, worked it like Dwain Esper.

Roadshowing was a practice that had been around as long as movies themselves. In a nutshell, it involved the independent distribution of films dealing with racy or taboo subject matter. These independents had to work outside normal distribution channels due to the fact that their pictures had not been approved by the office of the Motion Picture Production Code. Without this office's certificate of approval, a motion picture simply could not be shown or distributed by a code-affiliated member. And all major distributors and theaters were members.

The mechanics of roadshowing were fairly simple. If another independent sleaze merchant was not working the territory, an advance man would be sent in to generate publicity and to plaster every smooth surface he saw with lurid ads for the movie. If a legitimate theater or hall could not be leased, it didn't matter. The film would be shown in a tent at the outskirts of town, in a skid-row flophouse or against white-sheet

screens in the middle of a field. As long as there was money to be made there was no compunction on the part of the independent over the venue provided.

Quite often an independent was able to book one of his films in a legitimate theater. And if you're wondering why an owner would risk getting his building burned down by citizens outraged over the appearance of something like *Damaged Goods* or *Child Bride* in their town, it was because of money. Theater owners were promised fifty percent of the take at the box office.

If the police or an outraged minister appeared at a show, a sanitized version of the film was shown. This rarely needed to be done due to the strong moral stance the independents adopted in relation to their perverse product. While the posters promised lurid tales of sexual debauchery and dissolute lifestyles, the founders of these film companies worked tirelessly to convince the public that the sole *raison d'être* for screening these movies was to educate: to warn the gullible citizenry of backwater burghs that the forbidden delights shown on the silver screen would and could, even if sampled only once, lead inevitably to incarceration, madness or death. Just in case the audience didn't get the point of these usually inoffensive morality plays - the titles almost always promised more than the films ever delivered - a sham scholar purporting to be an expert in some particular field of depravity was provided to deliver lectures and to answer questions. Some independents were better than others at working this scam. Nobody however, not even Kroger Babb, worked it like Dwain Esper.

Esper did more than hire a lecturer or employ and advance man to allay the fears of the bluenoses. He had his blonde, slightly-built wife run things in the more staid communities to preserve the facade of moral rectitude and he designed a seven point platform on "the making and showing of motion pictures" that he took great pains to insure received national attention. This platform was published in all the major dailies as well as in wholesome publications like *Modern Motherhood* magazine. The public



**Freaks aka Forbidden Love aka Nature's Mistress
aka The Monster Show**

and the Hollywood community was completely bamboozled by such chicanery and subsequently Esper encountered little trouble with his roadshow attractions. Although how a man could convince people that he was making moral films based on a platform that when closely read proved to be nothing more than gibberish, while distributing films with titles like **Marihuana: Weed With Roots In Hell**, is almost beyond belief. Ironically, in an industry dominated by men, it was a woman who provided the incentive for Esper's descent into the netherworld of cinematic exploitation. That woman was his wife Hildegarde, no stranger herself to the seamy side of show business having started her career at the age of eight when she shilled as a snake charmer for an uncle who sold snake oil from the back of a horse-driven wagon. Hildegarde met Esper thirteen years later when he was working as a motor-

cycle stuntman and she was working as a stringer for the *LA Times*. They married, but Hildegarde kept her job and Esper put away the motorcycle to begin making cheap films for various motion picture companies. A few years later, Hildegarde inspired by the death of her dope-addicted physician uncle, presented the script for **Narcotic** to her husband with the suggestion that they produce the film themselves. Esper was thrilled; he had found his calling.

Narcotic, released in 1932 was the first of Esper's roadshow vehicles. It cost \$8,900 dollars to make and played over 2,000 engagements becoming a staple of the roadshow-exploitation market through the 1950s. At the height of the film's popularity in the late thirties and early forties, Esper, as an added attraction would exhibit the embalmed body of "Elmer the Dope Fiend."

It would be two years until Esper

made his next film, but during this period he discovered another way of making money on the roadshow circuit: acquiring distribution rights to unknown or unreleased films, retitling them with racier names and dumping what invariably was a piece of absolute garbage on an unsuspecting public. Thus a lame anti-drug film made in Egypt became **Sinister Menace** (1932). *Ingagi*, a dreadful jungle pic was released by Esper in 1934 as **Forbidden Adventure** (1934).

If Esper couldn't acquire the distribution rights to a picture, he didn't worry about legal niceties; he just stole or copied a print. His most famous bit of thievery involved the film **Freaks** (1932). Esper not only purloined a print, but also matted in "Dwain Esper Presents" over the frame where "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Presents" formerly appeared and hacked out the written introduction and the studio imposed happy ending.



According to Dan Sonney, a Friedman partner in crime, Esper's most infamous film, **Maniac**, which was released in 1934, "died when it came out." So with the help of Louis Sonney who was co-producing the film (and one of the major exploitationeers of the time), they withdrew the picture, retitled it **Sex**

Maniac, made up new trailers and lobby cards and proceeded to knock 'em dead at the box office.

Viewed today, **Maniac** can only be considered inept in every respect. It is so laughably bad however, that only a curmudgeon would find it anything less than enormously entertaining. How can you not enjoy a film that has a rapist who thinks he's the killer orangutang from Poe's *Murders In the Rue Morgue*, a cat fight in a moldy basement with syringes as weapons, and the plucking and eating of a feline's eye. As to the last bit, Friedman states that Esper told Dan Sonney to find a one-eyed cat, but after producing the furry beast, Dan never revealed how or where he was able to find one so quickly. Friedman never bothered to ask. He said he really didn't want to know.

Maniac is also notable for its use of footage from two silent features: the Swedish film *Witchcraft Through The Ages* (1920) and the German *Siegfried* (1923). These are superimposed over the madman's face during his sordid soliloquies to symbolize his deepening lunacy. Of course, the players overact so viciously that use of this footage can only be considered superfluous. Everyone seems to be in such a fever that the munching of an eyeball seems a perfectly reasonable act. Perhaps Esper realized this, because at every opportunity he inserted ludicrous written explanations concerning the specific mental maladies that were about to be enacted.

After making a small fortune with this piece of lubricious lunacy, Esper spawned the six reel feature **Modern Mother**. It was released in 1934 and is notable for being one of the first films to utilize birth footage in a dramatic context. Little is known about the picture today and, outside of a few existing stills in the hands of collectors, there is no evidence of the film's existence. Friedman has seen the picture however, and has acclaimed it a classic of the pre-war exploitation film era. Then again, he uses the same words to describe **Maniac**, so perhaps it is just as well that **Modern Mother** is left to rot in its canisters somewhere in a Hollywood vault.

And 1936 saw a number of marijuana exploitation films hit the screens. The most popular of these was a now forgotten film entitled *The Pace That Kills* (1936). Following hard on its heels were the cult classics of today: *Assassin of Youth* and *Reefer Madness*. All of these films were condemned by the Catholic Legion of Decency. All of these films made a ton of money.

Esper wasted little time jumping onto the moneymaking bandwagon with the subtly titled **Marihuana: Weed With Roots In Hell** (aka *Marihuana*). And because he was entering the dope film game a little late, Esper decided he needed a little extra publicity. So he submitted his movie to the Motion Picture Production Code Authority. Not surprisingly with a motion picture containing nudity, simulated sex and depictions of drug abuse, Esper was denied the vaunted



Raped by a man who thinks he's an orangutang?



"An eyeball is something like an oyster!"



"certificate of approval." This was just fine with Esper; now he could scream to the public on his circulars that the film was banned by Hollywood. Which of course it wasn't but Esper was never above manipulating the facts a bit. Once when the cops had ordered Esper to be out of town by midnight, he promptly changed the theater's marquee to read:

**LAST TIME TONIGHT BY
ORDER OF CHIEF OF POLICE!**

Most of the drug films of this period were woefully short on story. The skimpy screenplays usually had innocent kids getting hooked on mary-jane by the local pusher and, after a few wayward experiences, getting killed or jailed. In *Marihuana* things get a bit more . . . uh, complicated. Here the heroine gets hooked on weed, gets knocked-up because of its baleful influence, sells her kid to the local pusher and, after becoming ad-

dicted to heroin, tries to raise some quick cash to support her habit by kidnapping a kid for ransom. However, the kid turns out to be her sister's baby and even more unbelievably, her own child. It seems the local pusher sold her kid to the sister to raise a little scratch for himself. Now armed with this knowledge and with the coppers closing in, our hapless heroine kills herself by overdosing.

To allay the guilty consciences of his audience, Esper introduced the film with a long, written narration that assured attendants that the story they were about to see was taken from actual police files and concluded by noting that:

Marihuana, Hashish of the Orient, is commonly distributed as a doped cigarette. Its most terrifying effect is that it frees the user to extreme cruelty and desperation.

March Of Crime, released in 1936 was a hilarious exposé of criminal life. The film is only twenty minutes long, but watching a woebegone jailbird being dragged to the electric chair while a portentous narrator lifelessly intones, "Crime never pays, crime never pays. The rest is silence" will have you spritzing beer on the walls.

Esper's next film was also a two-reeler and was to be his last effort in the director's chair. The pic, which is entitled *How To Undress In Front Of Your Husband* (a helluva long title for a twenty minute film), can be found fairly easily and used for whatever purpose you'd like since it's in the public domain. *Undress'* origins are so sleazy however, that you may feel too ashamed to even rent the film. It's certainly amazing that Esper's wife didn't draw the line with this effort and leave him on the spot. However, Mrs. Esper appears to have had no shame either as her name appears in the credits as a co-writer.

A desperate ingenue, willing to do anything to become a movie star, was the catalyst for *Undress*. That woman was Elaine Barrie, the young wife of the aging alcoholic John Barrymore.

Elaine married John with the understanding that he would secure a place for her in the film world. What she found out after marrying him was that John was broke and because of his chronic drinking problem, he was *persona non grata* in the Hollywood community. His wife soon discovered, much to her chagrin, that she was equally unwelcome.

What was an aspiring actress of twenty, broke and without any experience to do? Well according to Esper, it was to appear partially clothed in an educational feature that would be designed to instruct the ordinary hausfrau in the art of disrobing. It was all to be done with taste and style with no attempt to cash in on the Barrymore name.

So the film was, naturally, heavily advertised by Esper as starring Mrs. Barrymore whose name was splashed in bold print over a series of lurid ads. The film itself is even less tasteful. "Miss Barrie is unquestionably an authority on undressing," says a sleazy narrator to open the film. Our host then proceeds to inform us that "this

Daring Drug Expose!

Horror Shame Despair!

MARIHUANA

WEED WITH ROOTS IN HELL

NOT RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN

MISERY

SMOKE THAT GETS IN YOUR EYES!

LUST

CRIME

SORROW

WHAT HAPPENS AT MARIHUANA PARTIES?

WEIRD ORGIES
WILD PARTIES
UNLEASHED PASSIONS!

little lady," unlike other women, tantalizes her husband night after night with her striptease. "She must have it," says our intrepid guide, "because didn't she capture the world's greatest lover?" Unfortunately, Elaine doesn't have it, unless you'd consider a chest as flat as a board and barrelhouse hips as "having it".

The Barrymore clan was outraged and tried to suppress the film. They were unsuccessful but they had the satisfaction of seeing the picture banned in New York by the state commissioner of education as indecent and corrupting. As for Elaine, her new found avocation did not survive the controversy. She had bit parts in two forgettable films and was then relegated to the dustbin of Hollywood history.

And that was it for Esper as well. After completing **Undress**, he never made another film, his creative needs apparently satisfied unless you consider the swindling and conniving that he unfailingly practiced in his later life a form of creativity.

However you want to characterize Esper's activities in his waning years, you could not call them boring. What Dwain did for the next forty years or so was to arm himself with the few films of his own invention and the handful he had stolen or to which he had the rights and barnstorm across the country putting on shows in burlesque houses and drive-ins.

One of Esper's more interesting ploys (and not an uncommon practice among roadshowmen except that Esper raised it to an art form) was to change the title of a film when it exhausted its commercial viability and take it back on on the road with a new ad campaign. Thus **Freaks** became **Forbidden Love** which was pushed as containing what David Friedman describes as a "plethora of prurience." The film however, contains nary a frame of nudity so to avert the near riot that always ensued at the conclusion of the pic's unspooling, Esper would throw on what was known in the trade as a "square-up reel." Square-up in this context meant something designed to "square" the customer's beef, to allay the anger of the patron and because nudity was promised, nudity had to be shown. This usually took the form of a ten minute reel of wholesome hi-jinx in a nudist camp. It had nothing to do with **Forbidden Love** but the

marks never asked for their money back.

When the **Forbidden Love** campaign exhausted itself in the forties, Esper renamed the film yet again. This time out it was **Nature's Mistakes** and to ensure crowds for the now understandably wary theater owners, Esper concocted a movie and a live show featuring a troupe of real freaks with circus side-show veteran Sam "The Man with No Face" Alexander as the headliner. The whole she-bang was run like a circus with large banners covering the theater fronts and the malformed hirelings working from stands built high above the lobby which was covered with sawdust. This con was so successful that Esper was able to keep it on the road for over five years. All this for a picture that ran a little over an hour!

When he wasn't working grifts like this, Esper was suing people for screening films the rights to which he had often sold long before. His last suit was brought against NORML for its use of **Reefer Madness** without his consent. Never mind that the film was in the public domain, Esper believed that his opponents would always find it cheaper to settle out of court and he was usually correct.

Esper's final film-flam which he worked until a few years before his death, involved a mass of WW II footage which he edited into an "Atrocities of War" presentation. This attraction promised intimate views of Hitler and his subordinates and, if that wasn't enough of a lure for the unwary, Esper just happened to have on display in the theater lobby a 1937 Mercedes Benz. What was so special about a 1937 Mercedes Benz you ask? Well, this one just happened to be "Hitler's personal automobile!" The man had no shame.

Yet decency, honesty and compassion was not what Esper was all about. Esper was about making money any way and every way short of criminal activity that he could. In the process, he apparently managed to delude his audience into believing that they were being entertained. This is reprehensible but it is also a fascinating testament to the wisdom of the great iconoclast H.L. Mencken who believed that: "You can never go broke under-estimating the taste of the American public." By all accounts, Dwain Esper appears to have died a very wealthy man.



SWINE

IN

NEW WORLD ORDER



LISSEN, I
KNOW I'M NO
PRETTY BOY.



BUT
I'M
WHITE!



AND
I'M
MALE!



AND BETWEEN A LITTLE HEADSTART FROM DAD AND ALOT
OF HARD WORK, I'VE MADE IT TO THE TOP OF THE HEAP!



NOW I'VE GOT
EVERYTHING
YOU
WANT!



EVERY
THING!

I'VE GOT
ALL THE
CARS!



ALL THE
BABES!



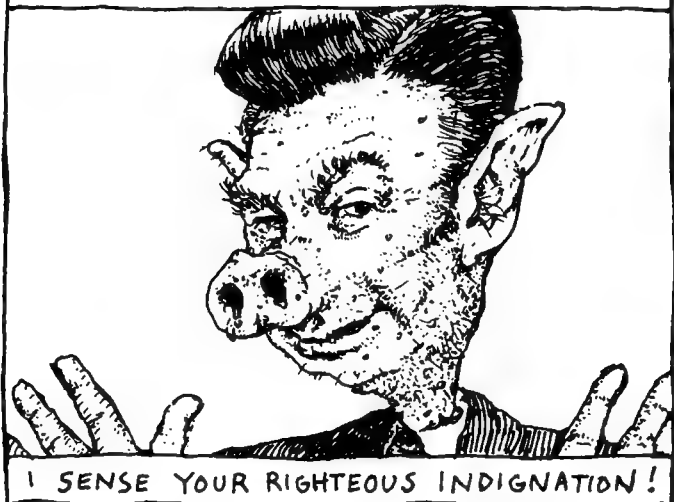
AND UNFLAGGING PUBLIC SUPPORT DUE TO WHOLESALE
PURCHASE OF THE LEGISLATURE AND A POPULATION
RAVENOUS FOR AN UNENDING SUPPLY OF INSIPID DRIVEL!



YOU WANT PEACE?!

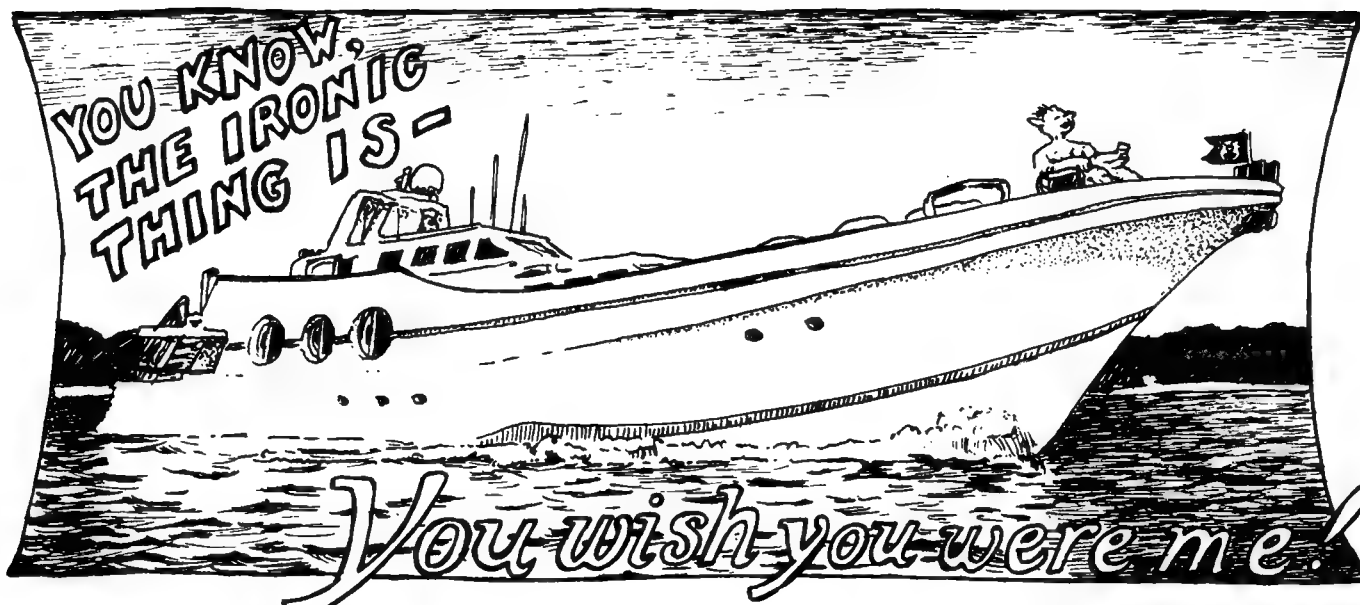


ITS NOT THAT I'M OBLIVIOUS TO
YOUR NEEDS AND DESIRES !

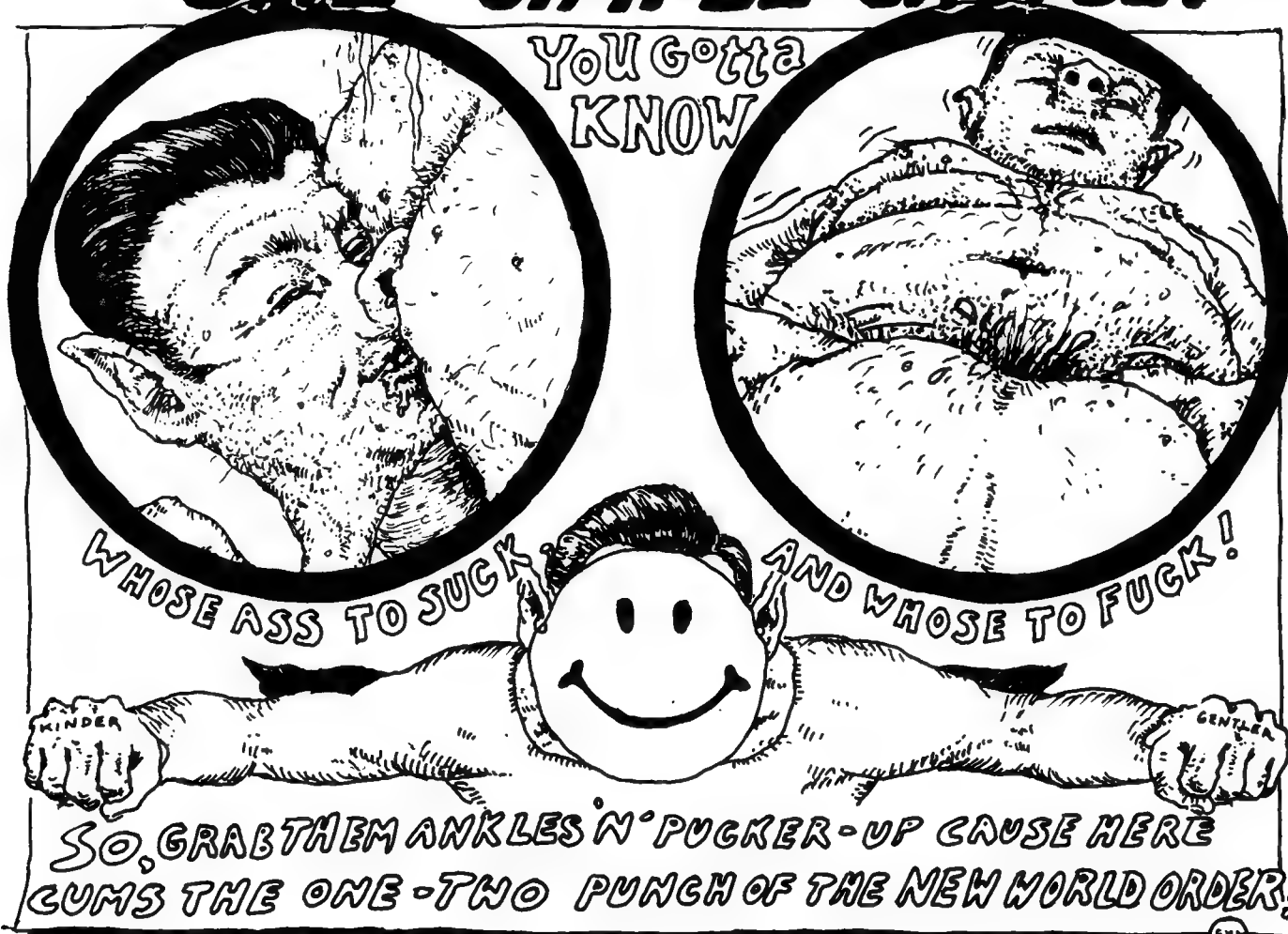


I JUST DON'T GIVE A DAMN!
HA HA HA HA HA HA!!





**LETS FACE IT, IT ALL COMES DOWN TO
ONE SIMPLE CHOICE!**



TINY WET SLAP

Reading
Brett
Easton
Ellis'
American
Psycho
is
only
slightly
more
embarrassing
than
buying
it.

by
Sally Ekhoft
Sally Ekhoft

Tiny wet slap, tiny wet slap, that's the noise a tongue makes when you take it out of someone's head and fling it at a wall. Slap! Kinda perky, kinda pathetic. Does it leave a sad little damp spot where it hits? Brett Easton Ellis explains it all for you in American Psycho and so much more - amid a circus of girls named Allison and Courtney and groovy guys who are into stock options and attitude glasses, Ellis conducts his latest literary experiment: the elaborate (if not exactly clever) grossout, with sound effects. Lots of them - everything from that poor little tongue to Belinda Carlyle, who is similarly moist and sad but not as tiny. Fans of graphic true-crime stuff who dig into this book will get far more than they bargained for. After the first three-quarters of the book, American Psycho gets so vile that it makes Ronald Markman's horrid tales in last year's ALONE WITH THE DEVIL (yes, even the one about the kid who drank dog-liver and coca-cola smoothies) seem flat.

If life were just a little longer, we could all consider tiny wet slap in all its possibilities, and there sure are a lot of possibilities. Real guy Albert Howard Fish perforated his balls with so many needles that he shorted out the electric chair at Sing Sing (look it up in HUNTING HUMANS). Kuno Hoffman "masturbated animals for sport" (same book). Ellis' fictional protagonist, Pat Bateman, nails somebody's fingers to the floor and rearranges peoples' dental work with a drill. Nice job, making millions by frightening your editors and irritating liberals, but I'm sorry. I'm walking around with my pantyhose falling down so the crotch is about halfway down my thighs, normal day, my bra straps are sliding off my shoulders, feel like I can't move, can't hold my liquor any more, feel like I ought to kill my boyfriend, slap slap: American Psycho is only really worth it if you can't stand the curiosity one more second and you must, must, must know what happens to breasts when you hook them up to battery terminals.

American Psycho is only really worth it if you

Reading *American Psycho* is only slightly more embarrassing than buying it. It is no more honest to admit that you're the kind of person who always wanted to chop open the kitty to see what's inside than to insist that you can't stand the sight of blood. Still, people who go, "Ewww, groooss," make me want to slap them with doubleheaded pig fetuses. Nobody gets down on anybody for reading *Crash*, but in *Crash*, the protagonist ends up more or less fucking a car. No similar justice for Ellis' man: he gets to go on eating expensive food acting like he thinks he's some pervy version of a J. P. Donleavy character.

No, wait, Pat Bateman is kind of interesting. He hates live music, though he knows the Top 40 better than his own address. And he's a compulsive preener, list maker, snob, snorting yuppie coke and washing his Valium down with Plax when he shaves. In fact, the best thing about

American Psycho is Bateman's mania for identifying designer clothes, or anything made by some Eurotrashy name. Here he is, waiting for his overbred date (he calls her "Restaurant Whore") to drop by so he can take her out for dinner: "A bottle of Scharfenberger is on ice in a Spiros spun-aluminum bowl which is in a Christine Van der Hurd etched-glass champagne cooler which sits on a Christofle silver plated bar tray . . ." A couple of beats later, you find out he's trying to read Garrison Keillor, for Christ's sake. And, lucky Restaurant Whore, tonight he is not going to "get any pleasure from watching her bleed from slits I've made by cutting her throat open or gouging her eyes out."

That's the whole book right there, except for the clever bits about Bateman and his friends ordering free-range

blouse by Dolge & Gabbana, suede shoes by Yves Saint Laurent, a stenciled calf skirt by Adrienne Landau with a suede belt by Jill Stuart, Calvin Klein

tights, Venetian-glass earrings by Frances Patiky Stein . . ." Oh, disgusting materialism, but don't you feel a little twinge? Come on, just a little one? Don't you love beautiful things? Of course not, you wear a black leather motorcycle jacket by Schott, Levis from the Gap, Doc Martens or a nice Betsey Johnson cabbage rose print and you're happily disgusted with anybody spending \$425 for dinner. The idea of these laundry lists, anyway, is unscrew your head and bore you a little, so you can feel what Pat Bateman feels, which is nothing. And here's the interesting thing about the lists: they never mention color. Everybody is drowning in cashmere and silk, Perrier Jouet isn't good enough for them, yet nobody mentions texture, flavor, or

can't stand the curiosity one more second and

warmth. The women are either hot or skanky, nothing else. The obsession with *things* adds what little real substance the story has. It's not about how decadent the young in this society got before the stock market crash.

Okay, here's the part you've been waiting for, maybe I'll transcribe it so you won't have to read the book - the part where Bateman rams the Habitrail into the woman's vagina and inserts the rat . . . Or how about when he hooks up the young "hardbody" to the electrical wires so her breasts spatter his venetian blinds with fat. " . . . next to the nail gun rests a sharpened coat hanger, a rusty butter knife, matches from the Gotham Bar and Grill . . ." Bateman kills a dog, blinds a homeless man, widens his best friend's mouth by splitting it open with an axe while the guy is alive but very drunk. Ellis makes his *Point*, god-damn it, that Bateman is crazy and this is *fiction*.

you must, must, must know what happens to

squid and doughnut sorbet. *American Psycho* is not anything so predictable as an indictment of the rich, even if its publishers want to say that on the back cover copy. The book is not even anything so serviceable as a tale of sexual domination, even though Bateman murders women almost exclusively. It's not much more than a crude story with an interesting literary device: those lists, which are as close to funny as *Psycho* knows how to get.

Here's Bateman meeting a friend in a restaurant: "Armstrong is wearing a four-button double-breasted chalk-striped spread-collar cotton shirt by Christian Dior and a large paisley-patterned silk tie by Givenchy Gentlemen. His leather agenda and leather envelope, both by Bottega Veneta, lie on the third chair at our table . . ."

And here's how his girlfriend dresses to see U2: "Evelyn's wearing a cotton

But Bateman is not Sebastian Dangerfield, and Ellis, Heaven help him, is not J. P. Donleavy, and that's all the solemn assessments you're going to get out of me. Bateman severs a young woman's tongue, "which I pull easily from her mouth and hold it in the palm of my hand, warm and still bleeding, seeming so much smaller than in her mouth, and I throw it against the wall, where it sticks for a moment, leaving a stain, before falling to the floor with a tiny wet slap." Excuse me while I yank up my pantyhose, reach down my shirt to fix my bra. If you want to bother with shit like *American Psycho*, go ahead, but I think I already saved you the trouble by transcribing the best parts of the book. Now that I'm comfy, I'm going to read a real book.

breasts when you hook them up to battery terminals.



Film Revivals Great And Small

Searching For The Magic

by
**John
Stevenson**

In an industry that increasingly worships the sure-bet blockbuster and embraces techniques such as test marketing, nothing remains as unscientific and unpredictable as the successful film revival. Why do films that flopped upon release return years or decades later to capture the public's attention, sending grosses skyward and earning undreamed of profits?

Sometimes a change of title or ad campaign can work wonders, but often the reasons go deeper, touching upon the very soul of our culture and engaging our ever shifting concerns and preoccupations.

As the budgets of today's major motion pictures soar and the number of films dwindle, the past offers itself up to be searched and plundered in our endless quest for new viewing experiences. In our increasingly nostalgia-oriented culture, the past is ever marketable. What's out there waiting to be dragged up from the sea bottom of our forgotten celluloid past? What lucky grab from the shelf of some dusty film vault, lab or library will be the next gleam in some film distributor's eye? . . . The next big revival? The legendary success story?

Times have changed considerably since the 1970s in regard to both American culture and the film industry itself.

Poor White Trash and **It's A Wonderful Life** represent successful revivals from opposite ends of the spectrum.

Bayou, produced and released in 1957, flopped at the box office and was soon pulled from distribution. Mike Ripps, the film's producer, bought the film out from United Artists and re-released it in 1961, rechristening it **Poor White Trash**. Ripps added some new footage of a guitar player strolling through a swamp singing the mournful theme song at the film's beginning and end, and he cut in footage of a girl being chased nude through the swamp only to end up sprawled helplessly in a pool of mud at the feet of her attacker who then performs (we assume) unseen debaucheries upon her. The re-released version of this warped and hackneyed Cajun passion-drama is decidedly sleazier if never explicitly so, and it went on to become a huge

exploitation hit throughout the sixties and into the early seventies. In best William Castle and Kroger Babb fashion, Ripps incorporated an ad campaign that featured uniformed police assigned to keep unescorted children out of theaters.

It's A Wonderful Life also encountered indifferent audience reaction on its release in 1946. Wartime filmmaking experiences had moved director Frank Capra towards this somber and profound examination of the meaning of life. Yet war weary audiences sought lighter more escapist fare and found the film too heavy and thoughtful. The film faded fast at the box office.

Around 1974, **It's A Wonderful Life** received TV exposure and hit home with audiences. The film's message of life-affirming hope pegged it as a Christmas movie and, it soon became an established Yuletide tradition in theaters and on TV sets around the Country, joining other heavily nostalgic-oriented films such as **A Christmas Carol** and **Miracle On 34th Street** in this most nostalgic season of the year.

Two other dissimilar major studio films that enjoyed celebrated revivals were **Fantasia** (Disney) and **Freaks** (MGM).

The midnight movie phenomenon that peaked in the seventies was an ideal launching pad for more off-beat

types of revivals since the concept allowed theater bookers an extra show-time to gamble with.

The number one midnight movie revival of the 1970s, **Reefer Madness**, took a strange route to the top. Released in 1936 as **Tell Your Children** and/or **The Burning Question**, this hysterical propaganda film was rediscovered in 1972 by Keith Stroup, founder of NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws). Stroup got his hands on a print and began showing the film for fundraising and publicity purposes, all possible since **Reefer Madness**, as he retitled it, was a public domain film.

An emerging cult-oriented distributor, New Line Cinema, took the film into even wider circulation, playing it in college campus cinemas as well as commercial theaters all across the country. It was a blockbuster. The film served itself up as a real cash cow for New Line Cinema which today has achieved major player status in the industry.

Times have changed considerably since the 1970s in regard to both American culture and the film industry itself.

Repertory and art house theaters have entered a period of financial struggle. A lack of new independent films have combined with increasingly conservative booking and distribution policies to force a restructuring of independent exhibition. In such a conservative atmosphere, experimentation is out. Theatrical play feature film revivals are quickly becoming a thing of the past.

The main ingredient of change, of course, is technological, not cultural. It's video. Almost single-handedly driving the spike into the blood-spurting heart of the midnight movie, video technology is becoming so all pervasive and flooding the market with so many new titles that movie revivals will heretofore play out on the small screen. No less an authority on midnight movies than John Waters says so. "Video is midnight movies today", testifies Waters. "I'd be a fool to make a midnight movie today . . . the times have changed."



"Fuck me, Joey. My head's a potato."
Mental Hospital

A new current in popular film culture is emerging, however, independent of the industry. It bases its appeal on the same nostalgia, laced heavily with schlock and camp that propelled *Reefer Madness* to the top back in the seventies, and its effect is being felt on video and perhaps soon on the art and repertory circuit. It is none other than the old educational film, the motivational, industrials and morality loops produced essentially for the classroom. No one ever imagined these films would see theatrical play.

The leading proponent of this new aesthetic, if nostalgia is anything new, is Manhattan based film collector and media archeologist, Richard Prelinger.

Prelinger specializes in non-feature length educational films. This genre can be bracketed from 1920 to 1980: from the advent of sound on film applied to classroom uses until this format was replaced by video and viewed by students on video monitor screens.

Prelinger estimates that within this sixty year period, 600,000 short films were produced - today most of them lost or languishing in obscurity. He began collecting film prints in 1982 after realizing that no one else was preserving them. Today his archive houses 20,000 films.

Prelinger's firm, Prelinger Associates, sells use of footage from his collection for up to ninety dollars per second, with stock appearing in Michael Moore's *Roger and Me* and a number of other major first-run films. He also markets compilations of old films on video, specializing in personal hygiene, safety and dating films from the 1950s that nostalgic baby boomers can identify with.

Prelinger has been profiled in the *Wall Street Journal* among other national publications, and he's presented programs of his films in Europe and across the U.S. at venues as diverse as rock clubs and museums to universities and film festivals - almost unfailingly to packed and enthusiastic crowds.

As Prelinger states: "These films were made for industrial, advertising or educational purposes, and junked as soon as the products or ideas they promoted grew old. No part of



Some people will do anything to rid themselves of unwanted facial hair.
Mental Hospital

American culture or industry was untouched by these films, but almost all of them are now lost. Few are remembered except by their producers."

With home video feeding the viewers appetite for a steady stream of new films, bootleggers, collectors and small distribution companies are mining the mountainous celluloid dunghoops of the forgotten past for exotic or weird items long buried. In a search for the off-beat and bizarre, the past is indeed more promising territory than the future, if only for the sheer number of films available.

A case in point are the films of Dwight V. Swain, who was recently shocked to learn that two of his films, *Mental Hospital* (1953) and *Ulcer At Work* (1959) have been rediscovered and are experiencing a revival on the big screen.

"I probably scripted fifty informational pictures all told," explains Dwight from his home in Norman, Oklahoma. "Before that I was the last of the dinosaurs - a beat-up old pulp magazine writer who went broke after the field vanished in the flood of TV and paperback books."

Dwight later held a professorship at the University of Oklahoma's School of Journalism and published books such as *Creating Characters: How To Build Story People* and *The Techni-*

ques of the Selling Writer - Film Script Writing.

Dwight scripted his films for the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health, and most of the films were directed by his friend, Ned Hockman who learned filmmaking with the first combat camera unit in the China-Burma-India Theater of World War II. After the War, Hockman became nominal head of the motion picture unit at Oklahoma University where he would work steadily on "informationals" throughout the fifties. Today retired, Hockman still lives in Oklahoma. All the films were cast, set and shot in Oklahoma, giving them a distinct regional flavor as well as showcasing the hard Oklahoma accent, especially in *Ulcer At Work*.

Dwight reports that Ned is ecstatic that the films are still being seen by audiences.

With titles such as *Anger At Work*, *Boredom At Work*, *Ulcer At Work*,

The main ingredient of change, of course, is technological, not cultural. It's video!

In a search for the off-beat and bizarre, the past is indeed more promising territory than the future.

ferentiated from the vast number of informationals produced in the fifties and now relegated to a dusty and oft-deserved oblivion in forgotten film vaults.

Ulcer At Work, paired with another obscure classic of the genre, **Assembly Line** (1961), recently played fifteen show dates on the German off-cinema circuit. The films were screened in Berlin, Munich, Bremen, Nuremberg, Stuttgart and elsewhere. **Mental Hospital**, in turn, met with enthusiastic response at the Copenhagen International Film/Video Festival in June 1990, and again at the Stockholm Film Festival in October.

Back in the U.S., both films played at the Roxy Theater in San Francisco on December 10th and 11th. Previously, **Mental Hospital** was screened in August at The Jewel Box Cinema in Seattle and at the 400 seat Tele-Arts Theater on Woodward

Avenue in downtown Detroit. In addition, both films have toured what could be called the American "off-cinema" circuit: galleries, bars and club spaces in a host of cities including New York, Boston, Hoboken, Minneapolis, Eugene, San Francisco and elsewhere.

As yet unavailable on video, these films succeed in drawing out couch potatoes whose appreciation of obscure film was honed on the video boom and "not on video" features prominently as a tag line on flyers promoting these shows.

While often blamed for the demise of rep movie exhibition, video has, however, accelerated interest in obscure classic film and this new popular focus may help to generate interest in theatrically toured packages of shorts.

The films of Swain and Hockman benefit from the talents and approaches of individuals, belying the common perception of dull educational films produced in impersonal assembly line fashion in dry institutional settings. Swain unashamedly brought his talents as a pulp writer to bear on the films, since, as he states, "I felt there was no reason fact films couldn't be entertaining as well as informative, so I introduced a story of sorts into each."

This commitment to a narrative dramatic story line gave birth to "real movies" peopled with characters that despite their silhouetted treatment manage to involve the viewer. Ever present, of course, is the element of nostalgia.

Mental Hospital is the story of typical patient Fred Clanton and his stay at the hospital for treatment of paranoid schizophrenia. Fred's wife, Betty, and a peripheral male, George, are introduced to set the ever vague dramatic context.

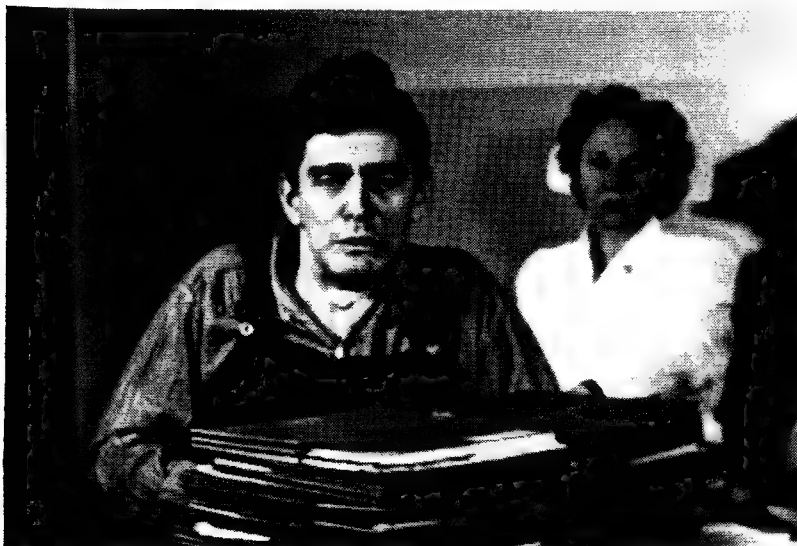
Featuring excellent black and white photography and scored with period music that effectively if heavy-handedly accents the changing tenors and tones of the film, it seeks to humanize and demythologize the mental hospital by providing an overview of admittance procedures and patient diagnosis and treatment.

The results are less than comforting, however, as we see patients undergo electroshock, ice pack and hydro therapy - the later two discredited by modern medical advances. The comforting narration and musical scoring wraps over some shocking visual images - including spinal injections - to give the film a creepy and bizarre cold bloodedness in places.

On the other hand, a humane approach to patient treatment is constantly underscored. The mental hospital is depicted as a place of protection for those unable to cope with the outside world, a place of reorientation where increasing levels of freedom are afforded to responding patients.

In our present situation of budget crunches that force the shutdowns of hospitals and the cutting of services, not to mention the trend in the seventies of putting patients out on the street, this approach does indeed seem humane.

"Every time I pass a dirty, stumbling psychotic on the street", says Swain today, "I cringe and think of the late Doctor Smith (hospital superintendent) and his comments on the hospital offering the helpless a place of refuge. In my own estimation, turning the patients out on the street is nothing short of criminal."



Fred, the schizo, anxiously awaits his driving test results.
Mental Hospital

refuge. In my own estimation, turning the patients out on the street is nothing short of criminal."

Mental Hospital is well paced, well photographed and well written if horribly acted. It's a motley mix of the comforting, the creepy, the unintentionally hilarious and the intermittently bizarre, and yet it still very effectively communicates its original message.

Like all of the Swain-Hockman films today, **Mental Hospital** taps a vein of pure nostalgia as we watch real people grappling to portray their film characters. This imparts an almost "home video" immediacy and authenticity totally lacking in the big budget pre-packaged Hollywood films of the era that normally serve as our window into the past.

As for the actor, Swain recalls it was impossible to use actual patients in these roles since they weren't legally competent to sign releases, hence the producers and crew doubled as cast.

"One part was that of a patient undergoing electroshock" recounts Swain. "I persuaded my wife of the period, a pianist, to play the part on the theory that no one would recognize her through the makeup; she'd be covered by disclaimers and so on.

"The results were hilarious. The psychiatrist in charge of electroshock (pre-frontal lobotomy too, as I recall) was a tall, gaunt, bald man who was the spitting image of the traditional mad scientist. He was scared to death that shock would actually be given to the fake patient, so he kept checking the equipment, the connections and so on. You can imagine how this effected my strapped down wife!"

"Things came off okay until later when the picture was released. Then every time my wife would go to play (piano) in some out of the way town, some little old lady would come charging up after the performance and cry, "Oh, Mrs. Swain, I'm so glad you're better now! I just hope you won't have to go back to the asylum again!"

"You can imagine what *That* did to my marriage!"

Ulcer At Work, made six years later, is perhaps the masterpiece of the Swain-Hockman collaborations. It's

more narrative and character driven than **Mental Hospital**, and yet it builds on the same structure of a message film stretched over the framework of what could be a pretty sleazy and sensational story if we were allowed to see more of it.

Faced with the task of transforming the subject of stress induced ulcers into a lively and dramatic film, Swain and Hockman went all out and the results are completely over the top.

The story centers on junior executive, Steve Hull, an ambitious career climber, "a smart boy with an idea" the intrusive and oft-bizarre narration informs us.

Steve is battered by the pressures of work and the demands of home life. This makes him mean tempered and tortures him with an ulcer that crumples him in seizures of pain. Wild blaring jazz music heralds these attacks as Steve grimaces and folds, marking a series of dramatic crescendos.

Finally forced to choose what's important in life, Steve rejects the high

pressure material gain lifestyle and re-orders his life, turning down a promotion to spend more time with his family. Here the film also uncannily reflects the psychology of the times (1959) as it questions the postwar materialism and suburban ethos that were starting to ring hollow.

The wild, racy jazz that scores the film combines with stark, shadowed black and white photography to mark **Ulcer At Work** as perhaps the only *film noir* educational. Except for a sequence when Steve consults his doctor, the film is well paced, interesting and strange. Classic 1950's

While often blamed for the demise of rep movie exhibition, video has accelerated interests in obscure classic film.

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anatomical stomach graphics strike the gong of classroom nostalgia.

Perhaps the most startling is the flashback sequence three-fourths of the way into the film wherein episodes of Steve's life from childhood to adulthood are acted out. Cheap sets swirling in smoke machine fog give this sequence the cast of surreal cabaret . . . all of it quite honestly offered up in the age old struggle to visualize scenes with virtually no budget.

Following their short films period, Swain and Hockman collaborated with Joe Burke to produce a 1963 feature film, *Stark Fear*. Starring 1950's horror queen, Beverly Garland, this low budget one-shot movie was filmed in Arkansas and Oklahoma with music performed by the Oklahoma City Symphony Orchestra. "If you think *Ulcer At Work* is bad,"

jibes Swain, "you should see *That one!*"

Both *Ulcer At Work* and *Mental Hospital* have been toured in short film packages labeled with titles such as *Classic Lost Trash*. They've been billed as trash as well as "industrial propaganda" and other less than flattering terms that harken back to the "turkey film" cult that has revived the films of celebrated hacks such as Ed Wood.

Does Swain object to his films being repackaged as camp or trash?

As previous comments indicate, he knew they weren't making *Gone With The Wind* and brought few artistic pretensions to films that were of purely utilitarian function.

They were forced to imaginatively improvise, which is what low budget filmmaking is all about. They could clearly see some comedy in it on oc-

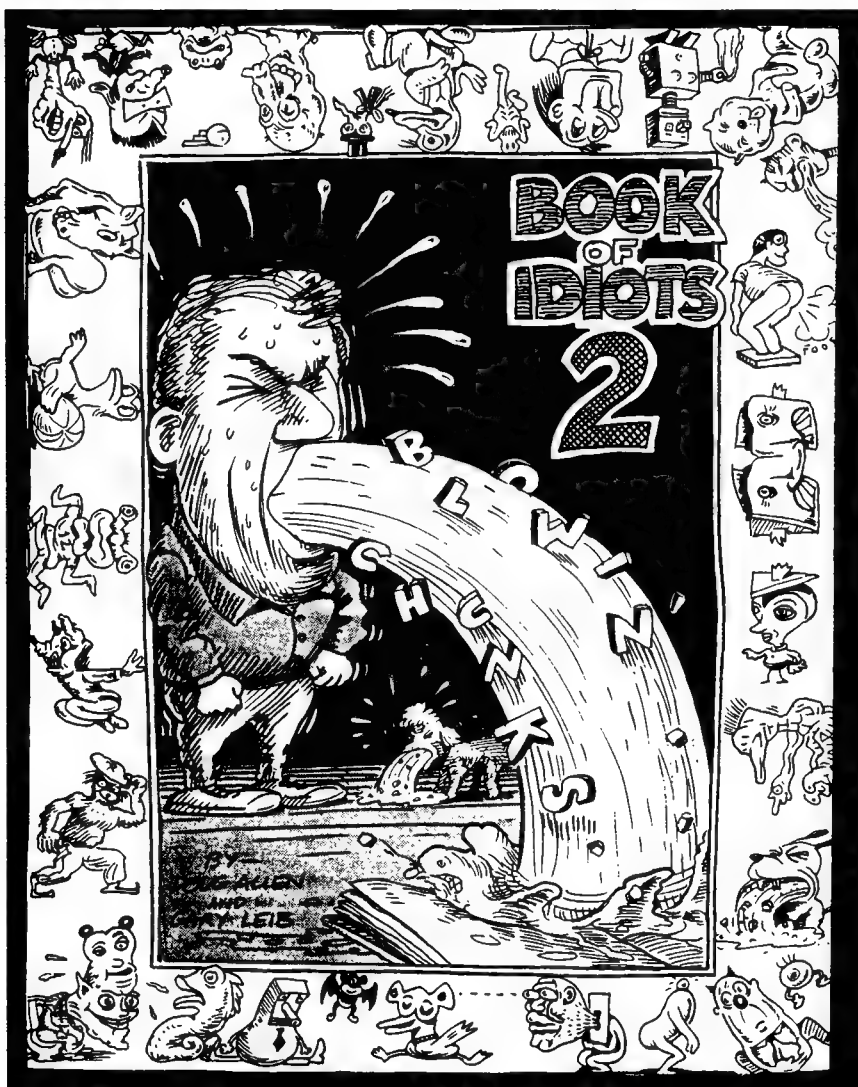
casation as well.

That these films are dated, Swain has no doubt. "Look at the Bela Lugosi *Dracula* if you want an example," he points out. "The style, the dialogue, everything gets corny. But at the time they were hot stuff."

Dwight reports that both he and Ned, whom he is still in close touch with, are delighted to be cult figures and would be happy to someday attend a showing or retrospective of their films.

Ultimately the Swain-Hockman films rise above the level of mere informationals, exhibiting a verve, spirit and imagination seldom on display in what is a very limited genre and showing us a vision of the past that Hollywood was never tuned in on.

Perhaps like it says on the placards, these films might soon be . . . "Coming to a theater near you . . ."



The cretinous characters that disgrace many of the Brutarian pages were purloined from a compendium of deranged doodlings otherwise known as **The Book Of Idiots.**

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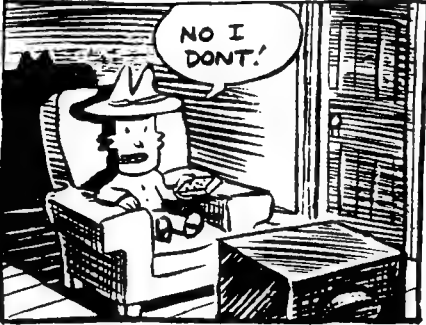
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OH.

HE IS A BOY WHO IS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD. HIS HONESTY SOMETIMES GETS HIM INTO TROUBLE

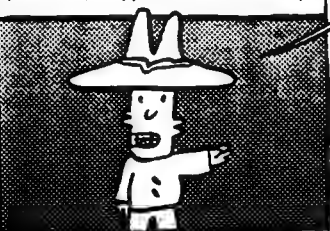


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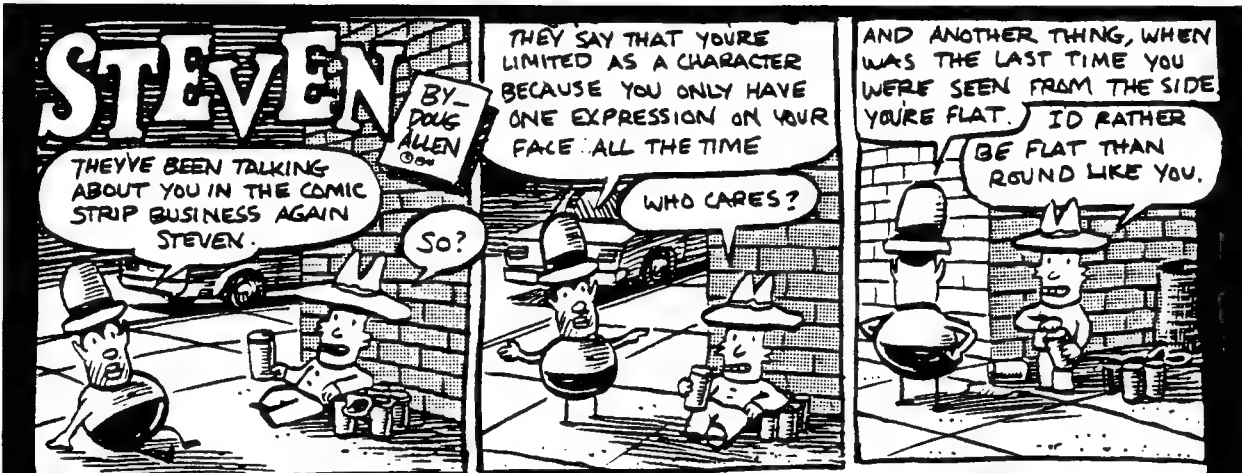
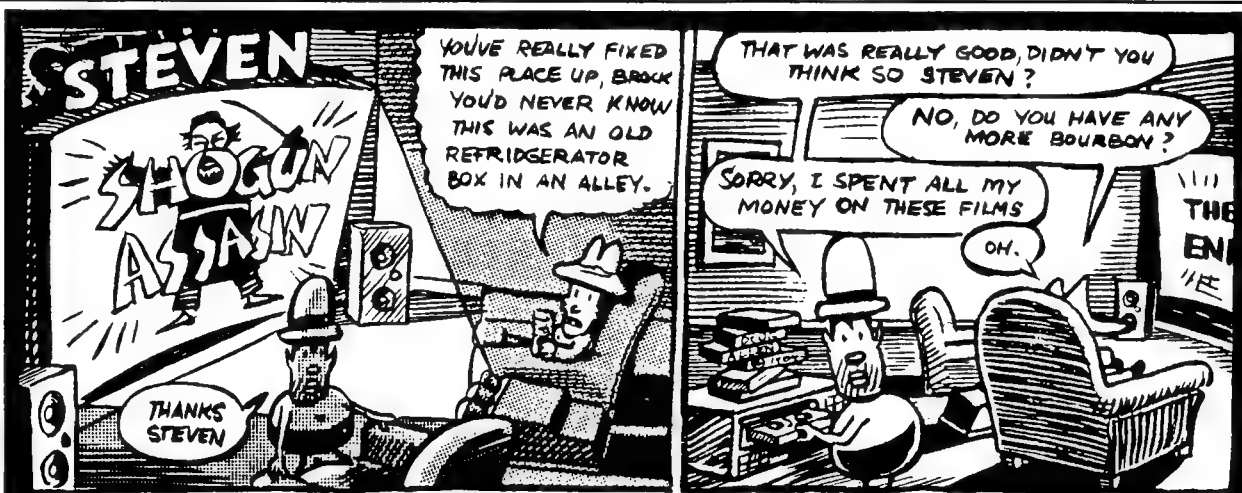
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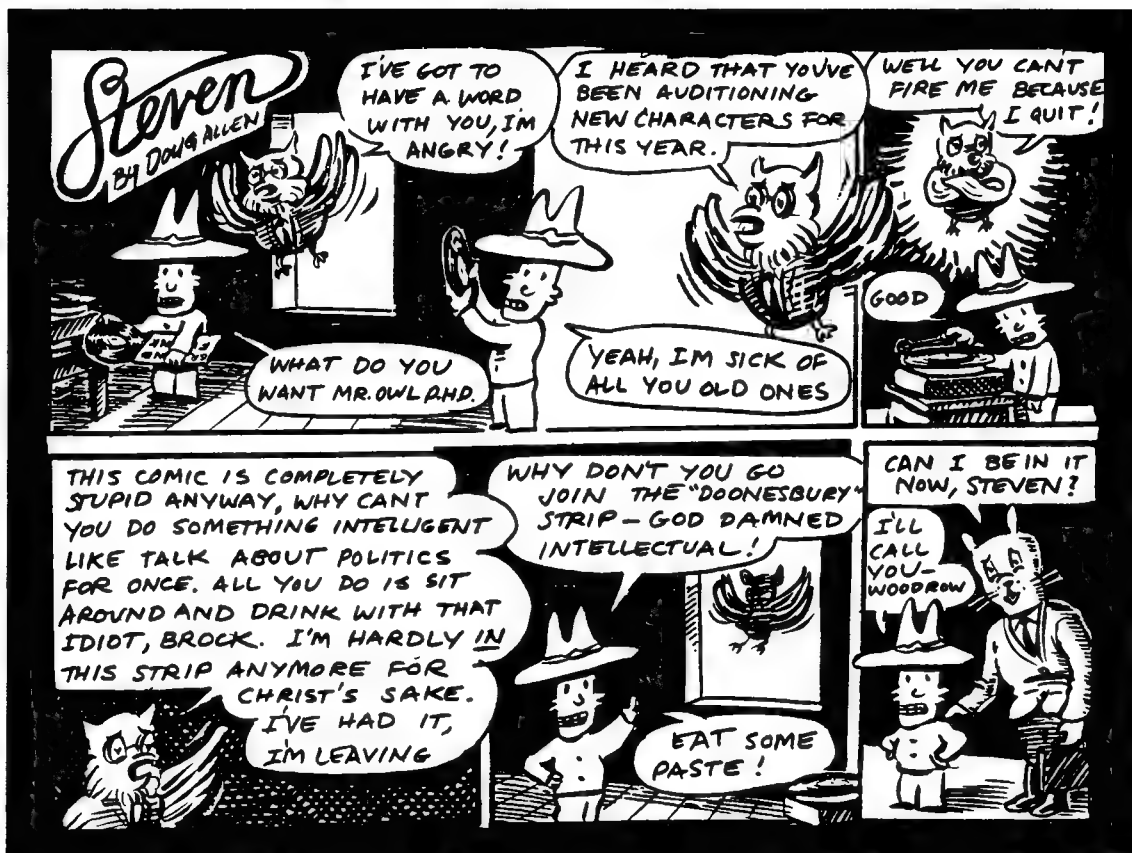
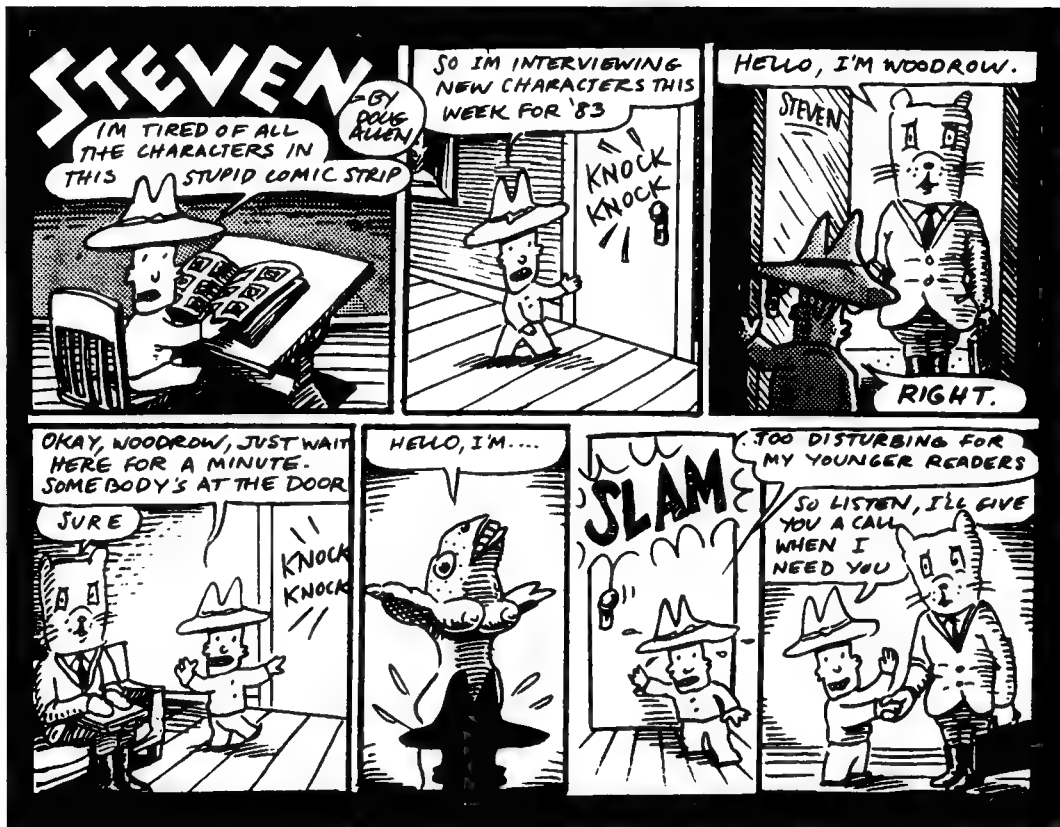


PUPPIES ARE CUTE AND FLUFFY PLUS.... I LIKE TO BURN THEM

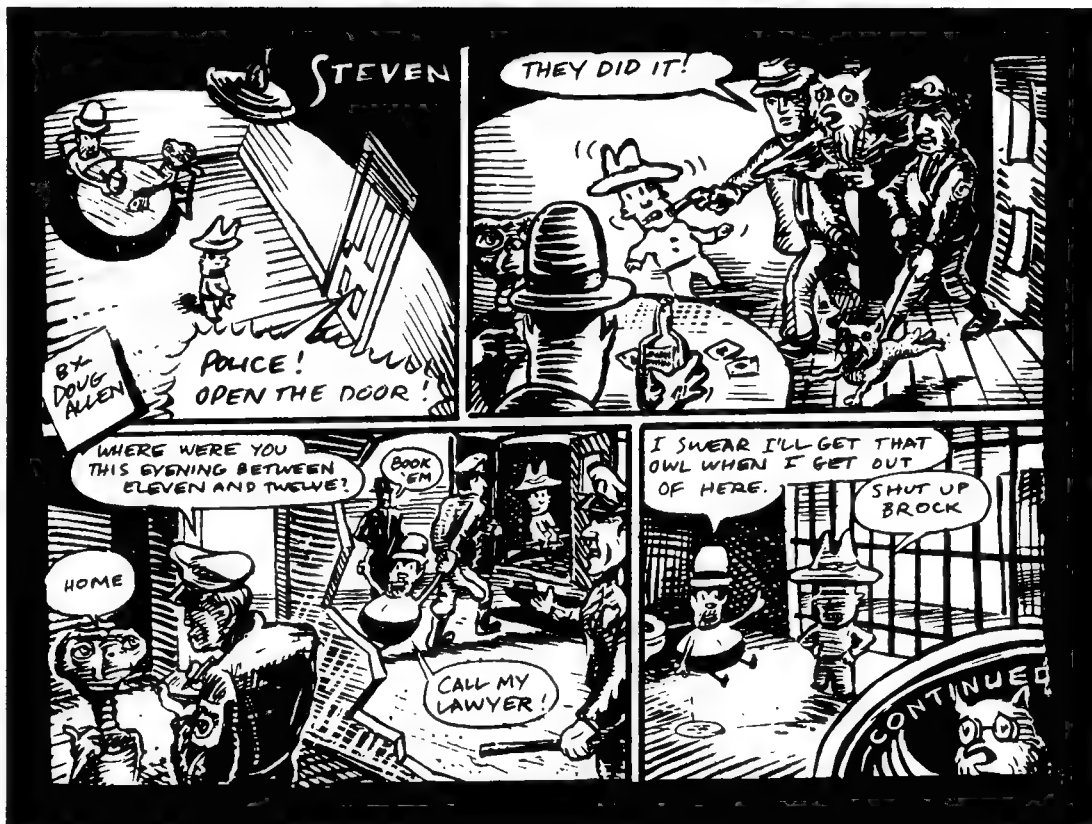


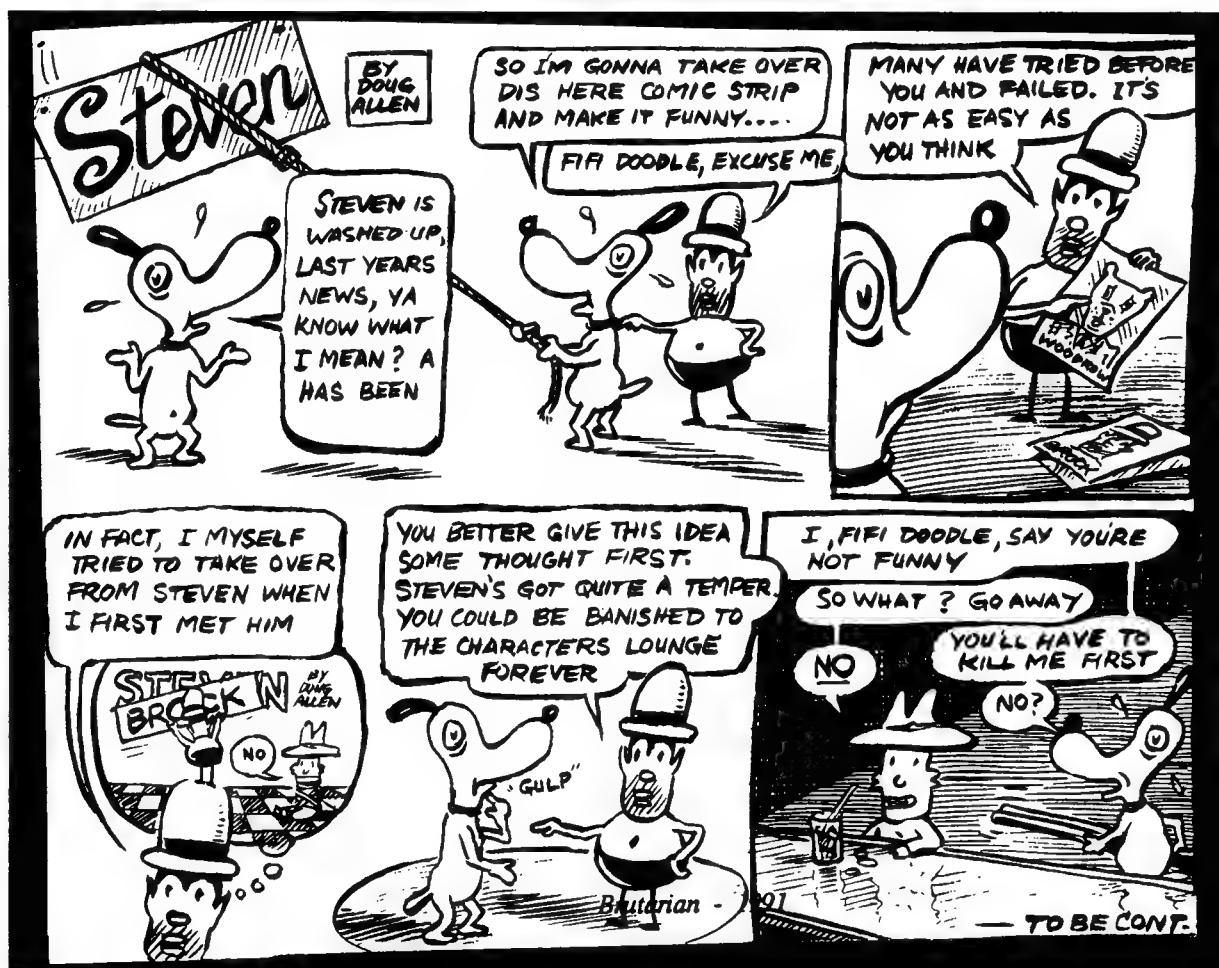
THE END



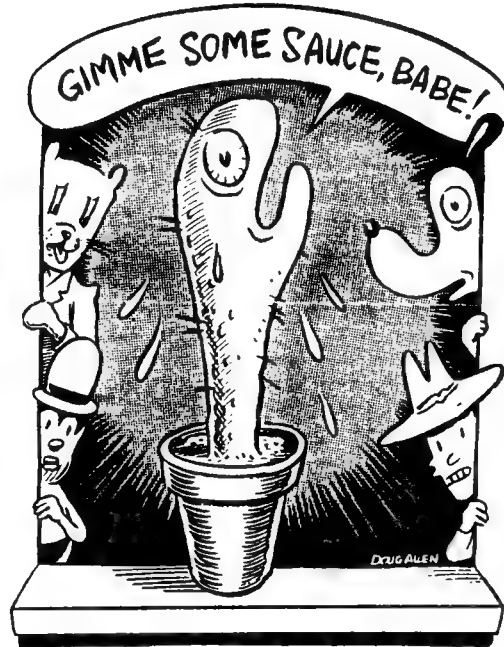






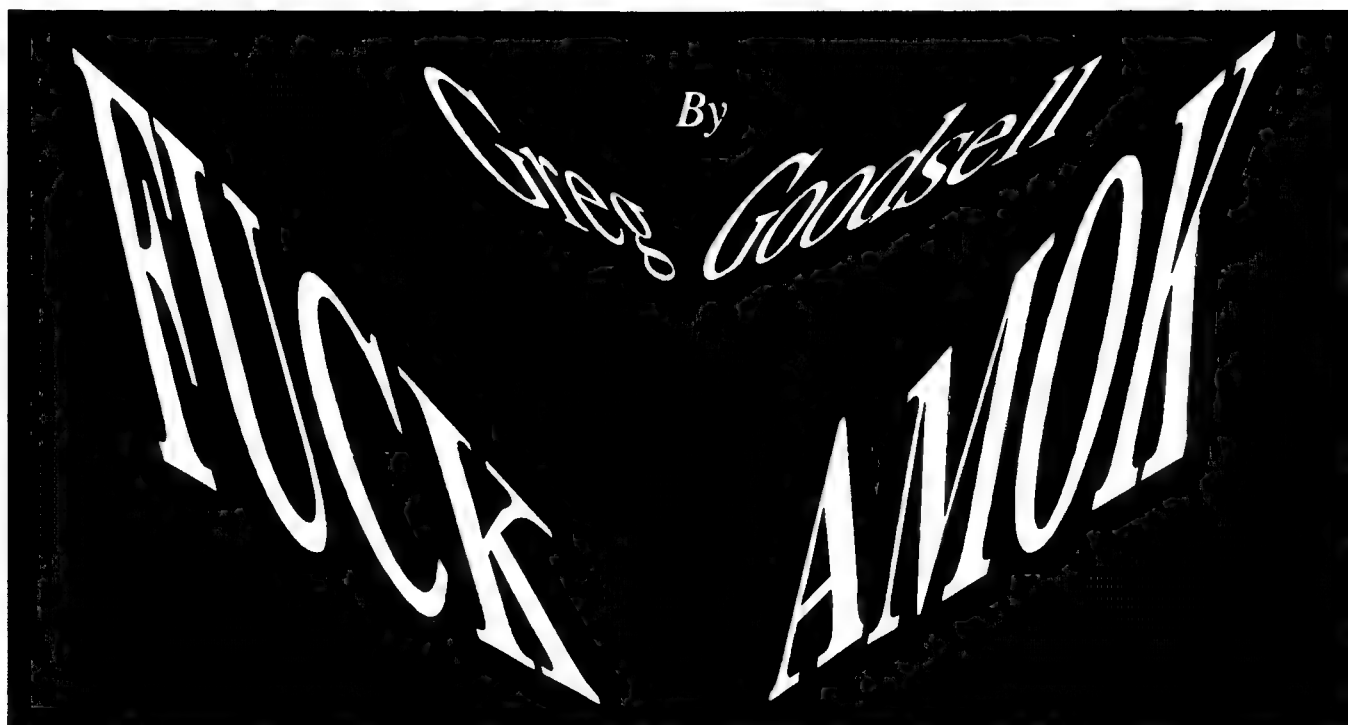


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When pressed what three things I would stress to the young and impressionable, they are invariably:

1. Look both ways before crossing the street.
2. Brush after every meal.

3. DON'T ORDER BOOKS FROM THE AMOK BOOKSTORE!

Am I being unnecessarily harsh and strident on that third and final point? Don't worry. Your narrator knows of what he speaks as I have the unique distinction (according to them) of being their first ever mail order customer.

Amok Books is both a retail and publishing firm based in Los Angeles. Theirs is an idea whose time is long overdue: extreme, unusual books, video and audio cassettes spanning the extreme netherworlds of contemporary knowledge. From their lavishly illustrated, 360 page book catalog: "The books offer unflinching looks at mayhem, virus, and decay; dissections of current global power structure; sexual impulses spinning out of control; psychiatric tyranny and schizophrenia; tribal rituals and ethnographic documents; psychedelic reality maps; the tactics of individual subversion and autonomy; and other stark

visions of our time . . . forensic medical texts and CIA torture manuals; behavior control techniques; biographies of serial killers and porno queens; fire-and-brimstone fundamentalist fulminations; Satanist manifestoes and Santeria spellbooks; nudist colony guidebooks and psychotronic film directories; human oddities picturebooks and UFO abduction accounts; riot control technologies and AIDS as biological warfare, the abolition of work and Situationism; keeping a severed head alive and creating a false ID; holocaust revisionists and African roots of Western civilization; necrophilia and gay truckstop sex; and countless other manifestations of the bizarre and provocative."

If this doesn't set the mouth to salivating, then take this commendation from Pope of Trash, John Waters, on the back: "A reading list from Hell that is a must for any serious oddball bibliophile."

All of this in a shiny color cover of a cackling woman rendered in garish oil paint. You don't know it yet, but the painting of this woman is in fact laughing at you, the self-styled junk culture flunky ready to lay out your hard earned dollars for very little.

READ ON.....

Their First Dispatch book catalog appeared on my doorstep in the mid-1980's. Thirty-two pages, it was most welcome; where else would one find Jack T. Chick Christian horror comics stacked alongside S&M sex manuals? Impressed with the wittily illustrated and researched catalog, I sent off my tamales on a book on Fortean and waited for the book to arrive in my mail box.

The order forms cautioned "Please allow six to eight weeks for delivery." I live in Bakersfield; Amok Books is stationed in Los Angeles, little more than one hundred miles away. I waited. And waited.

Their Second Dispatch, dedicated to fiction, had J.G. Ballard's *Crash* for sale. I wasted no time in sending my bread for this hotly desired item. Six months later, the book arrived with no apologies for being so tardy. I was more than willing to give them the benefit of the doubt.

By that time, Amok had opened up their own little bookstore in the Silverlake district. Their fat Third Dispatch arrived, and I managed to convince my friends to check out this odd little retail outlet.

Most everybody reading my words has probably dealt on some level with Amok through the mail: I have actually been there in person. The Amok Bookstore is a small cramped bookstore kitty-cornered from a Filipino market in one of the less glamorous sections of El Lay. The clerk at the time was Stuart Swezey, Amok mastermind who was very knowledgeable and helpful. But I took note of one important detail: copies of Ballard's *Crash* appeared in plenty on one shelf.

My immediate impression was, "Gee, it took them six months for them to send me a book that they had in stock!" Stay tuned. It gets better.

Our little treks to Los Angeles since then have always included a stop at Amok. As time progressed, the help there turned from helpful and knowledgeable to "insufferably hip." You know the type: minimum-wage earners who dress all in black and think they're too hip to acknowledge anything other than their own reflection in the bathroom mirror.

Adam Parfrey, editor of the indispensable *Apocalypse Culture* and prolific writer in his own way (if you've read *Hustler's* and *Chic's* abnormal sex columns in the past three years, you're already familiar with his work), was at one time a linchpin of this particular concern. I know that Parfrey broke off with Amok to set up Feral Press, and that the new, revised *Apocalypse Culture* is not carried at Amok. The clerks, in particular, get defensive when you request it. You start to wonder why . . .

By the time the Fourth Dispatch came out, the Amoksters had attained a rather bad reputation.

I know for a fact that friends of mine who ordered it never received the Fourth Dispatch. If you don't have it, it's because you sent in your \$8 - \$9 and have yet to hear from them. Don't hold your breath.

My friends and correspondents are an eclectic group: gore freaks, punk rockers, libertarians, collectors of arcana and the like, and every single, last one of them reports the same dreary report:

"I sent in my money six months ago and I haven't heard from them. The last time I ordered from them they sent me a credit slip! It took them six months to write back and tell me that the book I ordered was no longer in stock! I'm not putting up with their shit anymore, I tell ya!"

There are no exceptions. Every last person I know who has ordered from them has told me the exact same thing.

What value does the Amok Bookstore in Los Angeles possess?

That of appropriation.

Now, I don't advocate stealing, but in the case of the Amok Bookstore, the "service" (HA!) there compels you to do it. Most of the time the shop, cluttered with bits of cultural detritus (Donny and Marie Osmond lunch pails, voodoo dolls, Easter Island lawn ornaments), is tended by a snooty black film student who chatters incessantly on the phone about rare screenings of silent Russian melodramas, giving the consumer ample opportunity to stuff their over-priced printed matter into their fashionably baggy togs before buying 75-cent nudist postcards from the glaring cashier.

Gasp! This man in support of shoplifting! Has he no conscience?

Sure I do. It's kept in check when I remember the time this very clerk insisted I gave him a ten dollar bill instead of the twenty I handed him and refused to give me the correct change.

I can do this. They don't know who I am. Yet.

What value does Amok mail order have?

If you get the catalog, it's a keeper. Over 300 pages long, full of photos and illustrations. It's to be read from cover to cover in order to introduce yourself to aspects of modern life you never knew existed.

What you should do is go to your nearest Waldenbooks in the sterile mall near your home and order the books you want out of the Amok catalog. Your books will arrive in less than a month with courteous and professional service.

It's not as "hip" or "supportive" of "fringe culture," but if it's the books you're after, this is the only way to go.

But seriously folks . . . **FUCK AMOK!**

By Dan Snoko

THE KILLER



One Bad Hitman. One Tough Cop. And Ten Thousand Bullets.

Once you've taken a genre as far as it can go, turned it on its head and then pushed it just that much further, where the heck else is there to go? That's got to be what Hong

Kong director John Woo was wondering when preparing to make this film. Although Woo has been making films since 1973, he has only recently come up with his outrageously popular formula for re-energizing the Hong Kong "good gangster vs. bad gangster" flicks that had become so popular in the eighties. I really thought after *A Better Tomorrow 2* (1988) that Woo just couldn't get much more over the top without falling flat into self-parody. *A Better Tomorrow* had Hong Kong superstar Chow Yun Fat's character Mark definitely dead at the bullet-ridden climax, but since Chow's presence was the big drawing card, he is resurrected in *Part 2* as the twin brother who grew up in the U.S. Chow is back just in time to participate in an even bigger and bloodier shoot out between good gangsters, vigilante cops, and bad gangsters. The "bad" gangsters are blown apart and their blood paints the walls in what I think is one of the greatest (and certainly bloodiest) showdowns since Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*. This super excessive violence seems to be the *raison d'être* of John Woo's current films. But violence works in different ways in different films, and John Woo uses violence in a way few American directors seem willing or capable of doing. Let's take a closer look at *The Killer* and I'll try to explain what I mean.

The "Killer" of the title is played by Woo's favorite star Chow Yun Fat. There's never been a paid assassin quite so cool and debonair as this guy. He meets his contact

and long time friend Sydney Fung (Chu Kong) in a Catholic church where doves fly freely around the room under the watchful eyes of a statue of the Virgin Mary. From there he heads for a cocktail lounge where he watches a beautiful young singer, Jennie (Sally Yeh), perform a maudlin ballad before he heads for a backroom to blow away a couple of hoods. If you've never seen one of Woo's films you're probably going to find this scene a real eye-opener. It's swift, violent and at the same time almost breath-takingly witty in the way Woo manipulates the film's sense of time and space. It's exciting in the kind of cool yet shocking way I always wanted the James Bond films to be. This is the first time in the film that Woo invites you to identify with any of the characters, and he invites you to participate in murder. But as Chow's character, Jeff, attempts to leave the scene of the crime, he ends up accidentally blinding Jennie when she stumbles into the gunplay. This is the beginning of the end for Jeff because the blinded girl gives the police a description of Jeff's face and Jeff begins to feel a sense of responsibility for Jennie's predicament. You see, Jeff has been able to justify his work because he only kills other criminals. But what's happened to Jennie makes him think about the impact of his violent life on the innocents around him. His mobster employers on the other hand, only care about the fact that the police now know his face, making him a liability to them.

Jeff starts to show up at the lounge where Jennie still sings her sappy pop songs (although now she admittedly has more of a reason to be so bummed) and he gives her very generous tips to help her out. One night as she leaves for home, two would be rapists attack her and Jeff beats the hell out of them and ends up walking her home. Because she doesn't associate Jeff's voice with the face of the man who blinded her, she invites the kind stranger up for a cup of tea. As she prepares the tea, she turns on the stereo and plays the song she sang that fateful night that he blinded her. As Jeff sits trembling with emotion, we cut across town to join Jeff's policeman counterpart Eagle (Danny Lee).

Eagle is involved in an undercover operation that goes bad fast and ends up with a lot of dead bodies around including an innocent bystander who has a heart attack because of Eagle's wrecklessness. Eagle and Jeff soon cross paths when Eagle is assigned to protect a mobster who is playing the part of a benevolent businessman. Guess who's been hired to kill him? Jeff is successful but Eagle is right behind him as he attempts to make his getaway. Things are further complicated when it turns out that Jeff's mob friends have decided that Jeff shouldn't live long enough to make his escape. During a furious gun battle between the mob, Jeff and Eagle, a stray bullet strikes a little girl playing nearby. When Jeff risks his freedom and life to rush the little girl to the hospital, he has given Eagle the clue he needs to track down the humanitarian killer. Eagle deduces that big hearted Jeff has probably made contact with the innocent blind girl.

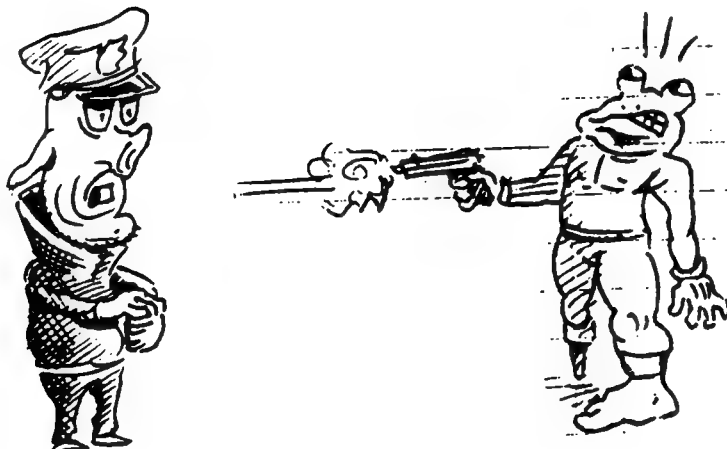
Now I don't want to give the whole plot away; you'll want to discover the twists and surprises for yourself. Let me just say that betrayal, redemption and lots of male bond-

ing is the order of the day. This is where Woo's use of violence takes the stage. You see, the only way these guys can be forced to show their affection for each other is under fire. I don't mean like in the old war films where the soldiers finally got to comfort each other as one guy's guts slid out his belly (although that happens in this film too). I mean they give each other big lovable grins as they take the bullets meant for each other and blow away their mutual enemies. And nobody blows them away quite as well as John Woo. Bodies twist and turn in slow motion as they dance to the impact of one bullet after another. Shotgun blasts send men flying ten feet and they would probably fly farther if they weren't splattering up against those white walls. Our heroes slaughter one hundred men and are shot about a half a dozen times each in the process. What does Woo expect us to feel as we watch this action/adventure *grand guignol*? How can we really feel anything for characters that are so obviously meant to represent, archetypical clichés as old hat as the killer with the heart of gold? We don't worry for the fate of these characters, we only take what visceral thrills we can as we watch the players blast their way to an ever-in-



John Woo's Chinese version of a Mexican stand-off

creasing body-count. Leave logic at the refreshment stand. Just sit back and watch Woo twist this run of the mill gangster plot into an adrenalin-pumping ride into unknown blood and guts movie territory. Woo's style is such that even when he pulls an ugly rabbit out of his hat he doesn't pause to wonder if you'll be entertained. He just goes on pulling out more rabbits to startle you. How many rabbits does he have in his hat? I don't know. But the incredible film he made right after this one, *A Bullet in the Head* proves he's not out of tricks, or rabbits, yet.







No Escape From The Devil

First things first.

BLACK SABBATH

**did not merely define
the musical sub-genre
known as Heavy Metal.
They created it.**

If you don't believe me, just ask Tony Iommi.

On a Friday the 13th, appropriately enough, in February of 1970, Sabbath's ground-breaking, earth-shaking, skull-crushing debut disc appeared in European record bins. With barely a bit of fanfare. With nary an advert, even! Four months later, the album was unloaded from Warner Bros. trucks in the U.S.

No big deal, thought WB. Just another rock-and-roll band good for a few bucks, a couple of follow-up records, maybe. Who gives a shit?

But something . . . unusual . . . was happening. In Britain first, and Germany, and finally the U.S.

Black Sabbath was selling, and selling very well. While the Warners' honchos shook their collective heads and wondered why in the world a debut LP recorded in three days by a group of four unkempt, shaggy-looking longhairs was marching steadily up the charts, the group's European label began issuing 45 rpm singles, complete with duo-tone picture sleeves, to bolster sales even further.

As an exclamatory point to Warner Bros. complete bafflement over Sabbath's improbable success, the record company placed full page ads in *Billboard* (aimed at the retailers, of course - not the consumers) which asked, "How come you've sold so much Black Sabbath?"

The record company, usually never at a loss for unadulterated hype, simply played on BS's anonymity and anomalous rise to fame. It was one of the stupidest campaigns I'd ever seen, because there wasn't any campaign!



by
**Randy
Palmer**

But because the early "campaign" worked so well (as WB saw it, that is; my own postulate is that the Sabs' popularity spread thru word-o-mouth, from record buyer to record buyer), Warner Bros. continued to use the same strategy throughout Black Sabbath's career. And that almost finished the band.

Almost.

First, there came a string of gold and platinum releases: **Black Sabbath** (June 1970 U.S. release); **Paranoid** (September 1970 and originally titled **War Pigs** which explains the cover); **Master of Reality** (August 1971); **Vol. 4** (September 1972 and originally entitled **Snowblind** but nixed by WB who didn't want to be accused of promoting drug use); **Sabbath Bloody Sabbath** (December 1973); **Sabotage** (July 1975); and a "greatest hits" (as if the band ever had any besides the inexplicably fashionable track from **Paranoid**!) double-album set called **We Sold Our Soul For Rock-N-Roll** (released in the spring of 1976).

Sabbath's music had, during all this time, been accused of being moronic, clumsy, crude, unrefined, cacophonous, and just all around offensive to the ears. Usually however, the critics slinging these verbal vexations were - or liked to think they were - connoisseurs of the art of R&R. Led Zeppelin was art; Black Sabbath was not and warranted little, if any, serious attention. *Creem* magazine regularly trounced Black Sabbath in their LP review column, no matter how good the album might be (The late Lester Bangs did write an important two part overview of the Black Sabbath phenomenon for *Creem* in 1971, however). Case in point: "This {**Technical Ecstasy**, Sabbath's eighth WB album released in October 1976} could be the soundtrack to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* . . ."

Sabbath's efforts began to mature in the mid-seventies and, significantly, this is when their LP sales began to decline. The aforementioned **Technical Ecstasy** flopped. By this time (1976), groups like Kiss (which supported Sabbath on the 1975 Sabotage world tour) were stealing the limelight, even though they couldn't be called heavy metal. The fans who got off on Sabbath's doom-laden lyrics and funeral-march dirges probably

either died from heroin overdoses or fell into "the more popular a group becomes, the less cool it is to like 'em" syndrome.

That's too bad, because **Technical Ecstasy** contained some of the band's finest material, including *Dirty Women*, *All Moving Parts* (*Stand Still*) and *You Won't Change Me* (gotta be one of the most depressing tunes ever written).

Then came the climacteric. Lead voice Ozzy Osbourne, dissatisfied with guitarist/writer Tony Iommi's iron rule (Iommi had always written the music; bassist Geezer Butler composed the lyrics), and more than likely fed up with Tony's penchant for using the Oz as a punching bag (that's another story for another time), left the band.

Chaos reigned momentarily, but after much brainstorming, no doubt, the British press announced that Sabbath had hired Dave Walker to be Ozzy's replacement. DAVE WALKER? One time Savoy Brown vocalist, Walker's style was certainly not suited to Black Sabbath's. But he did rehearse with the band, and the "new" Sabbath performed an embryonic, bluesy version of a tune called *Junior's Eyes* on the BBC. *Junior's Eyes* would pop up on the band's next album, *sans* Walker, thank God.

Ozzy came back to the Sabbath fold and the band went to great lengths to produce a state of the art record using the Rolling Stones Mobile Studio which necessitated rehearsing and recording in below freezing temperatures in northern Canada. The result, **Never Say Die**, was Black Sabbath's last studio production with Ozzy Osbourne on vocals. It peaked at number fifty on the *Billboard* charts and limped into near-oblivion. No one, it seemed, was interested in Black Sabbath anymore. Warner Bros.' "non-campaign" finally paid off: barely a soul knew the record was out.

Thus ended an era.

Thank Christ, said many.

Now, the interesting thing is this: had Ozzy not quit Black Sabbath this second and final time, it's doubtful the band would have remained together to produce any more records. **Never Say Die** was supposed to be their glorious tenth anniversary album/tour (count-

ing from 1968 when the boys got together under the moniker Earth), but even with the Stones' Mobile Studio facility and a record five hundred thousand spent on the production (if press releases can be believed), the album sounded thin and terribly weak. In addition, Sabbath's European label released a strangely (for Sabbath) upbeat tune (the title track) as a teaser for the LP's release, and followed that with *A Hard Road*, one of Iommi's least effective riffing songs - both of which went nowhere fast.

The tour was something else. With Van Halen as support act, Sabbath was filling mammoth auditoriums, SRO -- but nobody was interested in hearing *Shock Wave* or *Johnny Blade*. They were all shouting for *Iron Man* and *War Pigs*.

Tony Iommi must have been at a loss, really, as to how to handle Sabbath's then iffy future. After Ozzy quit, Iommi and company (at this time the band still consisted of Iommi, Butler, and original drummer Bill Ward) played with the idea of doing a farewell tour and releasing a live album, thus calling it a day. Reportedly Osbourne was interested in the idea, but Sabbath's management managed to convince Tony that there was a lotta life left in the Black Sabbath name.

Much of 1979 consisted of turmoil for what was left of the band. Geezer Butler left to pursue a love life in mid-America while Tony and Bill began making overtures to the diminutive Ronnie James Dio, a leather-throated front-man who had gained some notoriety with then ex-Deep Purple guitarist Ritchie Blackmore's band, Rainbow. Iommi was forced to call in



guitarist extraordinaire Gary Moore to handle the bass lines on what would become Sabbath's best-selling album since the early days: **Heaven and Hell** (1980). Geezer rejoined his mates in time for the world tour.

Most of the original Sabbath fans dismissed the "new improved" version as a lot of hype (finally, some real hype!), but in actuality, Sabbath A.O. (After Ozzy) has produced some brilliant heavy metal.

Heaven and Hell enjoyed a long shelf life and introduced a new Sab "anthem" (again the title track) that was destined to become a live show staple. However, as successful as the LP was, the 1981 follow-up, **Mob Rules**, though artistically richer and truer to Sabbath's roots, was nowhere near as financially successful as its predecessor. Tracks like *Sign of the Southern Cross* and *Over and Over* wouldn't have sounded out of place on Vol. 4 or **Sabotage**.

Now that Dio was composing the lyrics, Sabbath was enjoying a more mystical simulacrum. But that hard edge, that **Master of Reality** vision that along with Iommi's pulverizing progressions had helped define the early Black Sabbath, was fast becoming a phantom of the past.

Gone were immortal lines like:

**You made me master of the
world where you exist.**

**The soul I took from you was
not even missed.**

And in their place came fistfuls
of stuff like:

**Now, fell in love with a country
girl, mornin' sunshine**

**She was up from another world
Just to bust another soul**

**Her eyes were an endless
flame, unholy lady**

**Desire wore a special name
made to snatch your soul
away, oh.**

After 1982's **Live Evil** double album, Dio and substitute skin-basher Vinnie Appice, Carmen's younger bro, (who had stepped onto the drum stool vacated by heroin and alcohol ravaged Bill Ward, who literally fell off stage one night during the **Heaven and Hell** tour) left to form Dio. This left only

two original members, Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler.

However, it's important to remember that, even though the songs on the band's first nine albums were credited to "Butler/Iommi/Osbourne/Ward" or simply to Black Sabbath, it was Iommi who wrote the music and Butler who composed the lyrics. The loss of an Ozzy Osbourne or a Bill Ward or even a Ronnie J. Dio could not *significantly* transmute the essence of Black Sabbath. The *music*, that particular *heart* of the Sabbath sound, simply could not become a victim of musical metastasis, as long as Iommi continued to do what he had been doing for years: compose monolithic, mega-decibel metal.

And twenty-one years ongoing, Black Sabbath's material continues to demonize listeners, the ones who still pay attention.

Iommi and Butler lost little time in reshaping Sabbath once more after the departure of Messrs. Dio and Appice. Behind a self-imposed media smokescreen, negotiations were ongoing with Ian Gillan, vocalist of Deep

Purple during their most popular era (**Smoke On The Water**), who agreed to front Black Sabbath for "at least two albums and two tours."

Now the going was to get really tough.

Bill Ward returned to the fold to record **Born Again** (1983), which boasted the worst mix-down of any Black Sabbath record yet. The tour, with support act Quiet Riot, was a ponderous affair, with huge replicas of the Stonehenge monuments crowding the stage amidst billowing smoke clouds and whirling lights. Ward collapsed yet again and was replaced by ELO drummer Bev Bevan whose style was certainly not suited to Sabbath.

Gillan's voice could mix well with Iommi's thunderous riffs. *Disturbing the Priest* is a good example (which was also supposed to be the LP's title until WB began sweating bullets. Why offend such a massive record-buying segment of the public as the saints' servants?), but at times Gillan's screeching, straining yelps and yoops sounded 'orribly out of place. And once again, Geezer's lyrical talents were sorely missing.

Ian Gillan:

**Sweet woman are you
feeling right,**

**What was it that you
did last night,**

**You made me crazy, you
made me fly,**

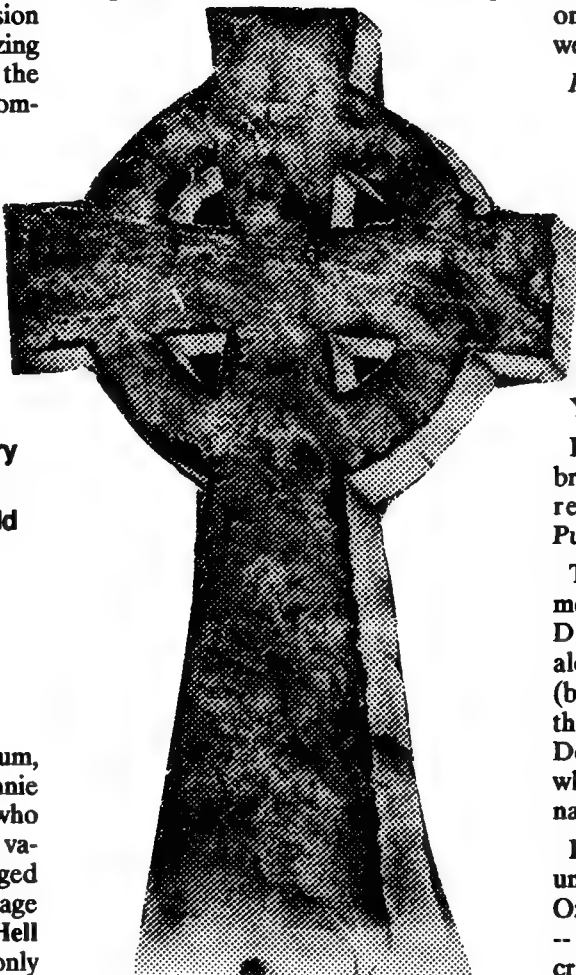
**I can't forget the hungry
look in your eyes.**

Yeaahhhh! Black Sabbath!

Immediately after the tour, Gillan broke his contract with Sabbath to rejoin the then reforming Deep Purple. So much for commitment.

There came a succession of replacements for Gillan, including non-entity David Donato, who appeared alongside Iommi, Butler and Ward (back again) in an exclusive feature for the British music magazine *Kerrang!* Donato vanished without so much as a whimper within months, and other names were bandied about.

But nothing significant happened until the Live Aid gig in 1985, when Ozzy Osbourne rejoined his old mates -- for nearly fifteen minutes -- as they cranked out *Children of the Grave*, *War*



Pigs and Paranoid, all sounding rather sloppy and undoubtedly minimally rehearsed.

Geezer split, and Iommi opted to record a solo LP, *Seventh Star* (1986). But Warner Bros., in their infinite wisdom, elected to identify it as a Black Sabbath album, leading to confusion all down the line.

Because *Seventh Star* was originally conceived as a solo project, Iommi felt more free to experiment. Tracks such as *Turn to Stone* and *Danger Zone* are pretty neat hard rock tunes, but the style that usually spelled out the essence of the name Black Sabbath was not there. WB's insistence on calling the album a Black Sabbath release undoubtedly did more harm than good. Critics laughed, and the kids simply didn't listen.

After the *Seventh Star* debacle, Iommi entered the studio with what he thought would be the new, solid Sabbath line up, with newcomer Ray Gillen on vocals to record *Eternal Idol*. Before the project was completed however, Gillen either left or was fired (depending on which press release you happen to believe) and in came another unknown, Tony "Cat" Martin. Gillen's vocals were erased; Martin laid down his warblings, and *Eternal Idol* was released in late 1987, their Warners swan song.

Keyboardist Geoff Nichols (never acknowledged as a full-fledged member of the band, even though he's been at Sabbath's side ever since 1980), composed most of the lyrics for *Eternal Idol*, and his style was never far removed from Geezer's.

Even though Sabbath was selling less records by this time (and admittedly it was not totally Warners' fault; the kids were marvelling at new groups like Metallica), Iommi was composing some of the greatest material of the Sabbath legacy. *Eternal Idol*'s title track reached back to the first album for inspiration, with doom-n-gloom lyrics and a spooky, horror-riffing style that surpassed classics like *Children of the Grave* and *Killing Yourself to Live*.

Eternal Idol proved that Iommi could still compose masterpieces of metal, but WB let the album die on the vine. Within months, however, IRS records offered Iommi a record deal,

promising to back Sabbath as Warner never had.

Sounded good. Iommi took the bait and recorded *Headless Cross* for the company in 1989. IRS sent out a couple of posters, a few pages of press releases, and bought a little advertising space in *Billboard*. The band set up an American tour to support the new album, but IRS did nothing to promote the tour and barely any fans showed up. Furious, Iommi and company skipped back to Europe for a more successful foreign tour which included their first Russian play dates.

Once Tony Martin was firmly entrenched in Black Sabbath, the band began assuming an identity once again; something it hadn't really had for a few years. Martin's lyrics sounded like one of Geezer's worst nightmares which was good for re-establishing Sabbath's devilish hallmarks.

On *Headless Cross*, Martin proclaims:

**Tell me not fear of flames
means that Heaven is closer**

**For I believe Satan lives in the
souls of the dying**

**Misguided mortals, you'll burn
with me**

Spirit of Man cannot be freed

Wow -- there really is no hope, according to Martin!

More:

**They say he comes for those
whose souls are weak,**

**And call his name upon the
wind**

**Tell every creature of the night
the kill is around the bend,**

Nightwing flies again.

And:

**And Angel of Hell is rising,
Heaven's no friend of
mine,**

**I see a Black Moon
rising,**

**And it's calling out my
name.**

And again:

**From the first evil night, When
a black flash of light**

**cut the crucifix half to
the ground**

**There's no escapin'
from the power of Satan,**

**For a people so brave,
so proud.**

In various interviews, Tony Martin admitted he felt Sabbath needed to re-establish that satanic identity which had been trashed lyrically by Gillan and Dio, which is why the LP *Headless Cross* is weighted down with a preponderance of hellish images. On the next album, *Tyr*, Martin explored other avenues -- like the blinding of slaves in ancient times (*Heaven in Black*) or simple hopelessness:

**Fire and water, wind
and rain,**

**Wings that carry Hell in
every vein,**

**World turns slowly, sun
don't shine,**

**Silence stills the air and
kills the chime.**

No devils there, but how much more depressed can y' get?

With Tony Martin delivering the kind of lyrics Sabbath have gained notoriety for, and with Iommi still churning out slabs of cinderblock-riffing -- and now, with Geezer Butler back in the legion of darkness -- how can Black Sabbath not be Black Sabbath (as many "fans" have claimed ever since Ozzy Osbourne split in 1979)? Is anybody listening?









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Brutarian

Library

A CRIMINAL HISTORY OF MANKIND

Colin Wilson

CARROLL & GRAF (1990)

This riveting and informative book will teach you more about psychology, sociology, philosophy, history and naturally, criminology than you ever learned in college and I'm willing to bet even money against those of you who attended graduate school. The beauty of Wilson's achievement with this tome is that he has taken complex theories and often mystifying schools of thought, reduced them to their intelligible essentials, and woven them into some mad and marvelous tapestry. **A Criminal History** is meant to be a textbook of sorts but with the compulsive readability of a great novel. Wilson wants to inform and to keep his readers turning the pages.

The premise of **Criminal History** is relatively simple. Wilson believes that the changing pattern of criminal behavior has evolved along the lines of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow, it should be noted, was somewhat a controversial sociologist who postulated that human motivation could be roughly grouped in four categories of needs or values: physiological needs (food and water); security needs (home or shelter); kinship and love needs (need for community, need to be desired); and recognition needs (need to be liked and respected by others). Beyond these needs, Maslow added the need for self-actualization, that is, the need to know and understand, the need to create and communicate effectively, to solve problems one feels are important, ultimately, to become an artist.

As society has evolved and become better able to provide for the needs of its citizens, the predominant criminal practices have correspondingly evolved (perhaps mutated would be the better term). Until the first part of the nineteenth century then, most crimes were committed out of the simple need for survival, i.e. the need for food and water. By the mid-nineteenth century even the most severely untalented individual could avail himself of sustenance, and so the domestic crime came into prominence. Individuals began to murder and steal primarily to safeguard their homes, no matter how shabby and poorly lit.

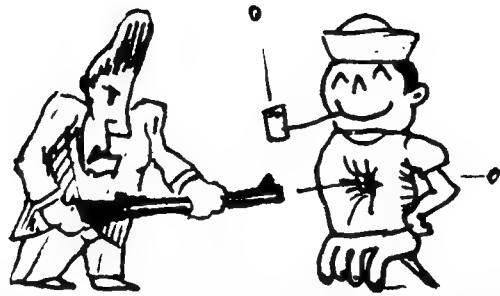
At the end of the century, a monster who came to be known as Jack the Ripper introduced what is known today as the sex crime. The Ripper was the first in a long and infamous line which includes recent practitioners such as Ed Gein, Ted Bundy and John Wayne Gacy. These crimes also include those perpetrated out of jealousy or the desire to rid oneself of a spouse for the sake of a lover.

During the late fifties, the crime that Wilson labels "self-esteem" begins to make its appearance. These are offenses committed out of the need to be somebody, to have one's individuality recognized. Society is of course blamed for denying these hapless fools the chance to fully "become" or rather, to "self-actualize." Charles Manson and his gang, Leopold and Loeb and Ian Brady (The Moors Murderer) are some of the more famous examples of this type (although these individuals could certainly be characterized as sex offenders as well).

Wilson's intent with this history is not merely to provide the grisly details of famous crimes and atrocities (although he does that). He wants you to understand why criminals commit crimes and how these crimes reflect a specific period in history as well as a particular stage in human development. This is no mean feat and Wilson is to be applauded for pulling it off spectacularly. **Criminal History** is essential reading not just for historians and criminologists but for everyone. If Wilson teaches us anything it is that a society whose citizens make no attempt to understand its criminals is a society sowing the seeds of its own demise.

THE CRIMINAL Jim Thompson

BLACK LIZARD (1986)



The Criminal demonstrates Thompson's abilities as a social critic. Ostensibly the story of a small town tough being railroaded for murder, it is really the savaging, in fourteen acts, much of it monologues, of the post war illusion of American suburban life as modern arcadia. In **The Criminal**, suburbia is a cesspool filled with sharks and minnows, a blighted filthy place whose institutions are either woefully inefficient or corrupt and where the ideals of truth and democracy have been hopelessly perverted. Here the lawyers beat their clients, the schools ignore their students and the legal system looks to the papers who in turn look only for profits. As with most Thompson novels, none of this is readily apparent; you're in the middle of the book and suddenly you have to put it down because you're having trouble breathing. "It has to get better," you tell yourself, "There must be some good that will come from all this." None does. The weak are broken like rotting kindling, the innocent are punished, and the strong, who are also the guilty, continue to pull the strings with bemused detachment. A bleak and despairing vision but listen carefully to the harsh music of Thompson's prose; you will hear something akin to laughter.

THE GRIFTERS Jim Thompson

Black Lizard (1986)

The film adaptation of this novel was responsible for a recent Thompson revival of sorts. There are two biographies of this great crime writer due out this year, and several of his more notable works have recently been republished in expensive paperback editions. It is ironic that **The Grifters** seems to have provided the impetus for the sudden interest in Thompson because it is not one of his better efforts. The story of a psychopathic con man named Roy Dillon, whose incestuous longing for his mother Lilly leads to his destruction, is little more than warmed over (and overworked) Freud. The writing is, for the most part, flat and uninspired. It simply doesn't crackle with the cynical wit and mean spirit one comes to expect from Thompson. Occasionally we get flashes of brilliance, as in the brutal scene where Lilly is beaten by a mob boss or when Thompson describes the nauseous rage slowly building in Roy as he listens to the nurse he has just seduced recount the sexual abuse to which she was subjected in a concentration camp:

Roy wanted to vomit. He wanted to shake her, to beat her. Standing apart from himself, as she was standing from herself, he was furious with her. Subjectively, his thoughts were not a too-distant parallel of the current popular philosophizing. The things you heard and read and saw everywhere. The pious mourning of sin; the joyous absolution of the sinners; the uncomfortable frowns and glances-askance at those who recalled their misdeeds. After all, the one time friends, poor fellows, were now our friends and it was bad taste to show gas-stoves on television.

Unfortunately, moments like this occur far too infrequently. It's doubly unfortunate because the average reader's initial exposure to Thompson will probably be, as a result of all the publicity generated by the movie, through this book. Too bad, because Thompson at his best was a savagely powerful writer who wrote about the dark side of the street and the dark souls who lived on it as few before him . . . and few since. If you think that's something of an exaggeration, pick up *Savage Night* or *The Killer Inside Me*. You'll see.

RECOIL

Jim Thompson

BLACK LIZARD (1985)

Sometimes you just don't know who to trust. People you think are your friends turn out not to be on the level, and those with whom you are barely familiar seem to have it in for you. There seems to be no reason for this sudden animosity so there's little, if anything you can do. You're trapped in a nightmare of someone else's design.

So you can really feel for Pat Cosgrove. A former convict, Pat has recently been paroled into the custody of Dr. Roland Luther, a man Pat has never met. The parole board has not provided Pat with an explanation of why a total stranger would want to take responsibility for him, and the Doctor, well, he isn't talking. After being released, Pat is set up in a nicely furnished room with a well stocked bar in the Doc's house and is given a job with the state highway commission. Sounds like Pat's ship has finally come in, right? Maybe not. The Doctor isn't really a doctor and the job is little more than a sinecure.

Naturally, Pat has a lot of questions, but he's not sure who should be on the receiving end of his queries. There's Doc's wife Lela but she's too busy sleeping around with half the town to notice anything. There's Doc's lawyer, Hardesty, but he's clamming up, invoking the attorney-client rule of confidentiality as an excuse. Even Doc's secretary Madeline who's just made a play for Pat refuses to talk, instead asking Pat to trust her.

Pat's no dummy. He's read everything in the prison library during his fifteen year stretch, including Machiavelli, so he knows you just don't get something for nothing and you can't trust anyone, especially a dame with fast hands and willing lips. He's being set up as a fall guy by Doc but he can't confront Doc or any of his friends without winding up back in prison. Moreover, Pat has no way of knowing just who is and who isn't Doc's confidante so he really can't open up to anyone. His hands are tied, but if he doesn't do something his neck might wind up in a noose.

Thompson masterfully pulls you into this Kafkaesque conundrum and so bamboozles you that you end up turning the pages like a madman to see how it all works out. Tough, sexy, funny, and with more plot twists and turns than a Coney Island roller coaster, **Recoil** delivers everything you'd expect from a good hardboiled mystery.

THE RIP - OFF

Jim Thompson

MYSTERIOUS PRESS (1989)

Britt Rainstar the erstwhile protagonist of this later period Thompson work is something of a dolt. It isn't that he's stupid; it's just that he lets things happen to him. He lives in a huge mansion that he's allowed to fall into disrepair and he's let the county use his grounds to dump its garbage. Then there's his personal life. Britt is married to a woman he hates, but she won't let him divorce her, something about his trying to kill her to collect on a life insurance policy. Of course he's never seen the policy but his wife's slimy father assures him that the policy exists. Anyway, his wife and father-in-law both live in another burb and only pester him occasionally for money. Enter Manuela Aloe, a blonde, five foot, ninety-five pound package of dynamite with a lucrative job offer from a somewhat disreputable holding company and hell literally breaks loose. Suddenly Britt finds killer dogs in his hotel room, skeletons chasing him about his estate and invisible men taking pot shots at him. The obvious solution is to dump the girl but Manuela is a hot little number - foreplay is having Britt grip her hips while she pisses in a sink - so dumping her is out of the question. Besides, it could be his wife and father-in-law that are behind all the insane bits of business that are taking place. So Britt does nothing which only results in more confusion and greater risk to life and limb. A skillful blend of lowbrow comedy and mystery with a surprisingly erotic dash of scatological sex, **Rip-Off** is a wonderfully complicated tale that will have you asking questions right up until you turn the final page.

THE SERIAL KILLERS

Colin Wilson and Donald Seaman

CAROL PUBLISHING GROUP (1990)

Ask anyone to come up with the name of a serial killer and they'd quickly respond with Ted Bundy or the Boston Strangler, perhaps the Hillside Strangler. Ask the same individual what differentiates a serial killer from a garden variety murderer and he or she would be hard pressed to tell you. This book will teach you the difference and serve as a fascinating introduction to the subject. Think of it as a guidebook to the serial killer:

The serial killer, usually a man, is an individual for whom murder has become a kind of compulsion. Often described as a motiveless murderer because of the lack of personal connection between the killer and the victim, their motive is in reality nothing more than the need to kill.

This is the reason the serial killer is so difficult to catch but after reading Wilson and Seaman's tome you'll have a better chance of spotting one. While being so educated you'll also have the opportunity to read the fascinating case histories of many of the major figures in the annals of mass murder. And there are not as many case files on hand as you may think. The serial killing phenomenon is of fairly recent vintage having begun sometime around the end of the nineteenth century not really becoming a serious problem for law enforcement agencies until fairly recently. The reason? Society has provided too rich a bounty for too many of its citizens leaving them with too much time on their hands. With so much leisure comes boredom and with boredom comes fantasy which leads to attempts to enact or realize that fantasy. For the normal individual this means tying up your girlfriend occasionally or starting a fanzine. For the demented it means murder. Not murder as a means to sexual satisfaction - although sexual abuse is usually a byproduct of the serial killer's actions - but murder as a means of exercising power, of gaining mastery over the self and over others.

Despite the fact that we have come to better understand the psychopathology of these killers there is not much that can be done in the way of treatment. These individuals are truly in the grip of a twisted and irresistible impulse and the most that can be done for them is to remove them from society. Wilson and Seaman feel that with the sophisticated advances in crime detection, the serial killer will not be a bane to society for very much longer. With expert estimates placing the number of such predators at over five hundred in America alone, it is difficult to share their optimism.

BRUNO SAMMARTINO

An Autobiography Of Wrestling's Living Legend

IMAGINE (1990)



Many people are unfamiliar with the name Bruno Sammartino even though he is one of the most beloved personalities in the history of sports-entertainment. I use the term "sports-entertainment" because Bruno was a professional wrestler and as anyone who has watched a professional match knows - save those spectators suffering irreparable brain damage - the contests are fixed. No wrestler will ever admit to this of course. In fact, it is something of a tradition for grapplers to take to the airwaves and issue challenges to those, like myself, who claim that their chosen profession is not on the level. These challenges are rarely accepted; which is not terribly surprising, after all, who in their right mind would willingly enter the squared circle to face off with a six foot seven, four hundred and fifty pound animal called Abdullah The Butcher?

None of this should detract from the fact that the best wrestlers are terrific athletes who are asked to perform, night after grueling night, moves and stunts that would place even the finest "legitimate" sportster in the hospital. Then there is the fact that these guys, while often risking life and limb (well maybe not life), are also expected to make it look as if there is a genuine pier six brawl taking place. You think this is easy? Watch almost any of the clowns in the WWF

(Hulk Hogan's circuit) lamely trying to put their matches over and then watch the WCW (Ric Flair's organization) work their amazing verisimilitude. You'll quickly learn that a good physique and a willingness to take a fall or a punch is simply not enough; you need stamina, athleticism and, it should go without saying, a helluva lot of acting ability. As to the acting bit, if you don't believe me, listen to Bruno:

Just think when a Broadway play is put on, the actors rehearse their lines for months before they go on stage in front of an audience. My God, if what the writers say is true, then wrestlers are the greatest actors that the human race has ever known. Every night we rehearse the equivalent of a full-length production with different opponents in a different part of the country and then move on to a new presentation somewhere else the next day. Give me a break, Mister Media Writer.

Bruno had all the abilities mentioned above plus the essential quality that makes one a star in this sports demimondaine: charisma (if you guessed Italian heritage, mark it down as a nice try). During the sixties and seventies, Bruno almost single-handedly kept wrestling afloat in the northeastern circuit (roughly stretching from D.C. to Montreal), fighting, as champion of what is now the WWF, such colorful figures as Killer Kowalski, George "The Animal" Steele and Gorilla Monsoon, night after enervating night. So popular was Bruno, that Madison Square Garden, the home of basketball's Knicks and hockey's Rangers, became known as the Mecca of Wrestling thanks to the sellouts generated by each monthly Bruno championship grappling match. When other circuits needed to pump up a sagging gate, Bruno was usually there to lend a hand. And wherever he appeared - the deep south, the midwest, the west, overseas - Bruno played to standing-room-only crowds. To say that for a time the name Bruno Sammartino was synonymous with wrestling is not much of an exaggeration.

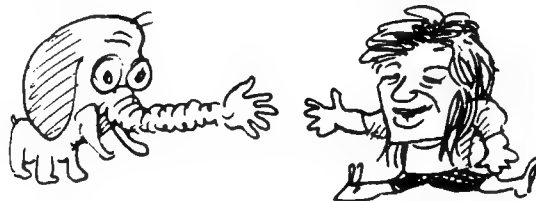
Like the man, Bruno's autobiography is a classy affair. He wastes little space defending himself or his profession, choosing instead to regale the reader with wonderful and sometimes harrowing anecdotes: childhood spent on the run from the Nazis, adolescence so impoverished that it forced an amateur mat enthusiast to wrestle an orangutang for chump change (it was a draw), and young manhood engaged in grueling and often spectacular matches with vicious men who often had a weight advantage of two hundred pounds or more. The most telling criticism is directed at Vince McMahon and his WWF, who Bruno (correctly) feels has sullied the sport with his obsession for buffoonery and inane melodramatics.

Now overwrought theatrics and harlequinesque characters have long played a part in wrestling but never to the extent where, as in the WWF today, the mat contests are presented almost as an afterthought. Unfortunately for mat fans and even casual observers, the WWF has made millions with their approach. This means that the other, more traditional circuits will inevitably follow suit. Then, like the WWF, all of American wrestling will be reduced to little more than a Saturday morning cartoon show and the few wrestlers of skill and intelligence left, will be reduced, like Bruno, to standing on the sidelines bemoaning the fate of their "sport."

SONGS OF THE DOOMED

Dr. Hunter S. Thompson

SUMMIT BOOKS (1990)



This batch of ephemera masquerading as a book is supposed to be a kind of journalistic *ku'ntstlerroman* tracing the growth of the good Doctor from his early years as a struggling novelist to the gonzo god he is today. Songs was mercilessly savaged by the literati who were either unable or unwilling to recognize Thompson's divinity: "An aging, toothless lion," roared one critic; "Degenerate, eccentric ravings," screamed another; and so on and so forth. The reception of the work was a bit harsh but writers who trumpet their own exalted status as frequently as Thompson has, even if its meant as a joke, leave themselves wide open to the brutal barbs of the humorless hacks who write for the dailys.

This said, it is still my painful duty to report that **Songs** does not even begin to approach Thompson's best work. The publishers have apparently recognized this as well, taking pains to inform the potential purchaser that these "notes" are only the "tip" of this "baffling human iceberg." Nevertheless, Thompson at his worst - which he often is here - is far more interesting than most writers at their best, and this includes sententious codgers like Bellow, Updike and the other somatic stylists published in *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review of Books*.

Thompson writes what he wants, when he wants. The subject doesn't really matter. In choosing to address something, it appears that Thompson first asks himself two questions: Does this thing piss me off right now? and Can I make the reader laugh in savage amusement over my anger at this thing? The inability to affirmatively answer the last question is doubtless the reason the Doctor abandoned political commentary for so long. After all, there is nothing even remotely amusing in the sight of desanguinated zombies in Brooks Brothers suits mouthing idiot platitudes placed in their gaping maws by party hacks and Wall Street carpetbaggers.

So, to conclude: this compendium of primarily unpublished and unfinished pieces is a mixed bag. It's Thompson clearing out his desk in order to make a little easy drug money. The Doctor would deny this of course. He would have you believe that **Songs** is an important work; a diary that charts the progress in his great becoming, a long and painful process that is now complete:

It was not an easy thing for me to accept the fact that I was born 1,700 years ago in an ocean-going canoe somewhere off the Kona coast of Hawaii, a prince of royal Polynesian blood, and lived my first life as King Lono, ruler of all the islands.

Thompson has become a God and so cannot be criticized by mere mortals. However, I too am in the midst of a great sea change and so feel eminently qualified to state that for the uninitiated, this slender and expensive volume is not likely to convert them to Thompson acolytes.

HIGH TREASON

J. Groden and Harrison Edward Livingstone

BERKLEY (1990)

The authors of this book tell you right off the bat what you have long suspected but may never have seen in print (not in a legitimate publication anyway): there is a shadow government that runs this country and controls most of its important institutions. It is not an established legal entity that holds regular meetings. Called "The Club" by insiders - you know it as the military industrial complex - it is composed of powerful and wealthy men from all walks of life: finance, government, military, and institutes of higher learning. Richard Nixon and George Bush are two of its more infamous members. The "Club" does not trust its citizens to elect the appropriate men and women to seats of power and influence so agitprop is employed through television and mainstream publications like *Time* and *Newsweek*, to brainwash the gullible and laconic American citizen. Ronald Reagan was perhaps the "Club's" greatest achievement: an automaton devoid of soul, brains and in all probability, a heartbeat; the Thing that could be programmed to dispense nonsense, no matter how outrageous or inflammatory, and render it avuncular and sincere.

Occasionally, an individual of independent vision and spirit assumes a position of influence. The last time this happened on a grand scale was in 1960. The man's name was John F. Kennedy. He lasted only one thousand days in the Oval Office.

That vital evidence concerning the assassination was either suppressed or altered by the federal government is no longer even a matter of debate. If you have any doubts on that score, this work with its overwhelming volume of recently uncovered documents and photos will put them to rest forever. Moreover, the authors take great pains to show not only how the government's evidence was fabricated or concealed, but how ridiculous the theories constructed from this

evidence are as well. In the case of the shredding of the single bullet theory, you'll find yourself laughing hysterically over triangular bullet patterns and projectiles turning in mid-air. Yet perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the cogency of **High Treason** is the fact that not a single major newspaper in the United States reviewed this book.

High Treason is essential reading for anyone who has illusions regarding America and its so-called democratic system of government. And make no mistake about it, it is not our "elected" officials but the military-industrial complex that is firmly running this country. Saddam Hussein didn't believe it and look what happened to him! His country was completely destroyed so that the Pentagon could avoid having to cut \$243 billion dollars from his budget. I bet that's the last time he listens to Bush when he tells him its okay to do something like invade a defenseless neighbor.

Of course the American public doesn't know this. The agitprop machine did its job: television was employed to depict the war as a cartoon, a form of kitsch entertainment like *Wrestlemania* (which in fact centered its most recent telecasts on a U.S. vs. Iraq theme); publications like *The New Republic* were ordered to take the Hitlerization of Hussein to almost surreal extremes by placing a cover photo of Saddam with his mustache cropped so that the resemblance to Der Fuhrer was more pronounced; and the newspapers are told to ignore the burgeoning anti-war movement.

Like the Kennedy assassination, the facts concerning the war with Iraq have been suppressed or fabricated. We are shown much. We are told much. None of it has anything to do with reality.

So the nightmare continues, but maybe, just maybe, if we could convince people to turn off the television for awhile and start to read we might end up with books like **High Treason** on high school reading lists. It wouldn't change things overnight, but it would be a step in the right direction. And it would scare the hell out of the boys in the "Club."



THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BAD TASTE

Jane & Michael Stern

HARPER COLLINS (1990)

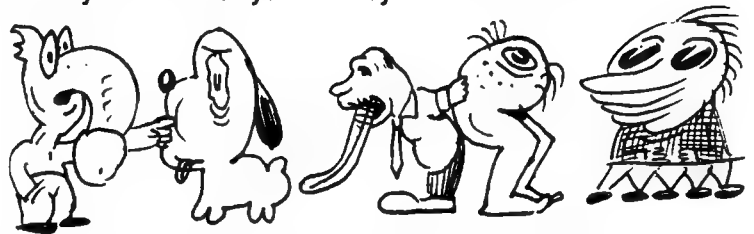
This comfortable suburban couple wants to end your uncertainty over what constitutes trash. Toward this end the duo assay a tentative list of all the major items in the American bad taste catalogue as well attempt to unearth the totems of the truly terrible. So what is bad taste exactly? According to the Sterns, it is that which "never fails to elicit the involuntary groan of horror and fascination," and "that which tries to mirror good taste and winds up on the wrong side." All well and good . . . until you look at the table of contents. Sure Lawrence Welk and spam belong, but what the hell are bikers and beer doing here? The Sterns say it is because they have, "like Cadillac tailfins, Elvis Presley, handpainted neckties, and lava lamps "all" fail[ed] to embody a set of values appropriate in their time." Well just whose goddamned values are the Sterns talking about here. Sounds to me like their talking about Pat Boone's and President Eisenhower's values not the values of anybody I know.

There is also another annoying aspect of this encyclopedia, and that is its constant jibes at manly trappings (e.g. biker regalia, tatoos) and equally manly passions (e.g. big breasts, pro wrestling). I was puzzled by this until I noticed the picture of the authors on the back of the book. Then everything suddenly became crystal, sparkling clear. To put it kindly, Mr. and Mrs. Stern will never be confused with Gable and Lombard. Michael looks like your typical ninety-eight pound weakling and Jane, well lets just say the word diet is not in her vocabulary. People who look like this could not possibly find the figures of Dolly Parton or Jayne Mansfield pleasing or appreciate the aesthetic and psychological realities that underlie professional wrestling. To find pleasure in such things would also entail a concomitant recognition of the Stern's own, quite startling physiological limitations. That is, if one is a pussy and one's wife is a fat slob, you're going to have to call bikers psychopaths and full figured women cartoons or otherwise admit that you are a wimp and your wife is a public embarrassment.

All of this aside, I have decided as a gift to you, dear reader, to disclose my own simple criteria for bad taste. It follows thusly: If an artist attempts to achieve a particular effect with their creation and fails, and that failure results in boredom or annoyance on the part of the intended audience, then the work can be said to be in bad taste. If the failure evokes laughter or amusement then it is an object of desire for all right thinking people and it should be considered a treasure. Using these criteria, it is easy to see that the paintings of Walter Keane are treasures, those of Andrew Wyeth are in bad taste. The compositions of Barry Manilow and Neil Diamond are atrocious because you do not laugh at the product of these unfortunate creatures, you instead fantasize about boiling them in oil. Later period Ozzy Osbourne and G.G. Allin on the other hand, fail at what they try to do (shock, revulse), but they always succeed in provoking raucous laughter.

Employing this line of reasoning, I am quickly able to dispense with this Encyclopedia. The Sterns have aspired to write the definitive work on bad taste. They have however confused the disposable (bad taste) with the memorable (some call this kitsch which literally means bad taste). I do not find this the least bit amusing. Therefore this superficially learned work can only be deemed in bad taste and neither worth your time nor your money.

HIGH WEIRDNESS BY MAIL
 Rev. Ivan Stang
 FIRESIDE (1988)



For the unconverted, the Reverend Ivan Stang is the founder and titular head of The Church of the SubGenius as well as the sacred scribe under "Bob." In other words, this guy is a crank, but unlike most eccentrics, Ivan is something special. If you're not familiar with his work, take it from me, the Reverend is a brilliant, mad dog satirist and you should read **everything** of his you can get your hands on. Unless you would rather have your life continue to be a "pitiful joke, a reasonless charade performed by broken puppets, a senseless ruse perpetrated by an insane God." It's your choice.

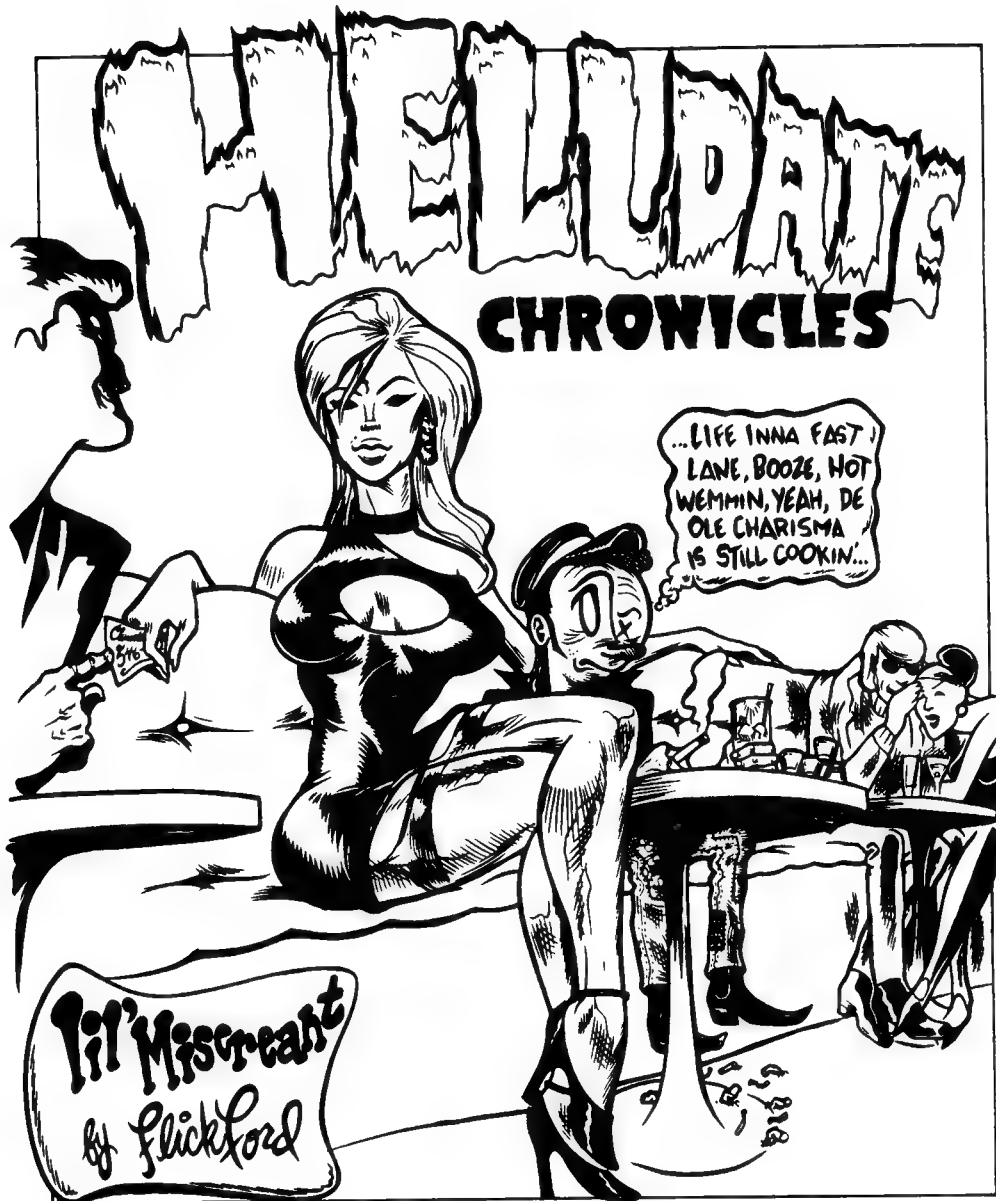
High Weirdness is a good place for the uninitiated to begin. Ostensibly a directory of crackpot publications, it is in reality a forum for Stang to rant and rave over the mindless idiocies committed by man in his never ending quest to improve his lot and that of his fellow man. Stang being the cheap-shot artist that he is, has chosen these psychotic publications as the launching point and inspiration for his hilariously acerbic diatribes.

The Reverend believes that to be truly well-rounded you must study the extremists. To ignore the babblings of the psychotics and socially maladjusted is to pitch one's tent in the valley of the walking dead: those hapless souls who believe what they are told by their TVs, their relatives and their breakfast cereals. In the past, you would look to the carry barker, the snake-oil salesman, the anarchist on the soapbox for the radical view; today you must look to the mail.

This is not an exhaustive compilation of mail-order offerings - that would take the better part of two lifetimes to peruse, never mind amass - yet it is a rather impressive compilation of kooks nevertheless. Stang's criterion is simply that these peculiar publications be weird, cheap and available by mail, that they possess "a certain, rare, delicate spirit of incurable psychosis." This means that dilettante poseurs and artsy avant-gardists have been dispensed with in favor of the borderline loonies of the art and entertainment world. And I do mean loonies. One editor of a supposed erotic journal to whom I sent my easily earned dough sprinkled Elmer's Glue on the cover and claimed it was semen. **High Weirdness** artfully divides the demimonde of the demented into twenty genres. It's all here folks: weird science, religion, politics and art, new age saps, bad film and sleaze, and fourteen more. The only advice I can give you before dipping in this compendium is not to make the mistake of skipping through any of the sections because it may be a subject for which you have very little interest. If you do, you will miss out on a lot of laughs, and who knows, you might just find a soul mate or some heretofore

unrevealed wisdom that placed in the right hands (like yours) could change the nature of life on this planet! Okay, so getting a hand-scrawled message from a schizophrenic who thinks he's being bombarded by invisible thought-rays by the plumber in the adjoining apartment isn't going to change your life, but reading about it through the bile-filled perspective of the good Reverend is certainly worth a few minutes of your time. Hell, even the captions utilized to introduce these pitiful publications are likely to elicit a few nasty chuckles. It's amazing how easily Stang can get to the heart of the matter in so few words.

Unfortunately, you're unlikely to find this volume at your local bookstore because it has almost no commercial viability. Let's face it, what store is going to stock a book that advertises itself as a clearinghouse for psychotic literature? B. Dalton? Walden? I doubt they'd even order the thing for you. "High Weirdness, sir? Perhaps you should try Louie's Bimbo Lounge. They have a magazine section in the back." No you're better off calling the publisher in New York or writing the Reverend at his PO Box 140306, Dallas, TX 75214. Tell him **Brutarian** sent you.



Hell Date Chronicles now appears in *Hawk*, a new men's magazine published monthly by Drake Publications.

Audio

James Brown
Roky Erikson
Martin Denny
Rockabilly Psychosis
Hasil Adkins
The Lazy Cowgirls
La Muerte
Pigface
Hellos Creed
Front 242
Front Line Assembly
Thee Hypnotics
The Perfect Disaster
Boris Mikulic
Stax Volt



Deprivation

Ever since they threw **JAMES BROWN** in prison, the record companies have been falling all over themselves in unearthing, reissuing and compiling the Godfather's recordings. Two of the best of the recent releases are compilations on Polydor. **Roots Of A Revolution**, which was issued first, tracks Brown's career from its beginnings on the chitlin circuit in 1956 to 1964 just before he broke through to the white pop audience. Omitting the early hits, the set is a musical odyssey of sorts, the struggle of a great artist to find a style rooted in R&B and then to transcend those roots. Fascinating. **Messing With The Blues** looks even further back to find influences in jump and earlier R&B styles. The thirty cuts include covers of tunes by the likes of Louis Jordan, Little Willie John and Roy Brown. Each of these volumes is great but if you can't afford both I'd stick with the **Blues** set.

Speaking of prison, **ROKY ERICKSON**, legendary leader of The Thirteenth Floor Elevators has just been released from the big house and in celebration of this momentous occasion, Sire records has released a tribute album: **Where The Pyramid Meets The Eye**. Featuring 17 original Roky tunes performed by a diverse assortment of artists, the only real losers are R.E.M. doing a lifeless *I Walked With A Zombie*, and Thin White Rope's tepid *Burn The Flames*. For the most part, the other interpretations are surprisingly effective with ZZ Top, Richard Lloyd and yes, Lou Ann

Barton providing the highlights. Roky himself has a new one out, **Reverend Of Karmic Youth**, featuring six songs that have never appeared before to my knowledge. These cuts feature Roky at his acid-besotted best singing folksy ditties about "unions in bliss" and "beautiful destinies" accompanied only by his guitar. The rest of **Youth** has Erickson and his band tearing through old favorites like *For You* and *Night Of The Vampire*.

The archivists at Rhino have put together a **MARTIN DENNY** best-of they call **Exotica**. Denny has been around since the fifties performing what many call Hawaiian music. I'd call it suburban primitive: muzak utilizing strange instruments like gongs, gamelins, bamboo chimes, boo bams and Japanese lutes. On top of this comfortable exotic sound Denny overlaid bird calls, jungle noises, the pitter pat of rain on oversized fauna and the quiet roar of waterfalls. Think of it as the aural equivalent of a well appointed Tiki Bar.

Oh sweet Jesus, this is the goods. Somebody finally did it. Put together a garage rock compilation that actually works. Sixteen pieces of hysterical, mindless, raving nonsense played with nary a smidgen of grace or intelligence by the likes of the Cramps, Sonics, Trashmen and Hasil Adkins. They even got the title right: **Rockabilly Psychosis**

And The Garage Disease (Big Beat Records) . . . You say the name **HASIL ADKINS** doesn't ring a bell. Well he's been tranking out his psychotic brand of rockabilly since around the time of the first coming of Elvis. Unlike the King, however, Haze (as his friends call him) is still cutting tunes. One of the coolest record companies in the world, Norton (PO Box 646 Cooper Station NY NY 10003), has just released not one, but two slabs of vinyl by this West Virginy hillbilly: **Peanut Butter Rock & Roll** and **Moon Over Madison**. Buy them both. Haze's primitive, arhythmic song stylings and disassociated um, lyrics reveal him to be a rustic mystic (as well as an ambulatory schizophrenic) and once you've run through one of his strange LPs you'll be howling for more .

If you were forced at gun point to host a biker party and had to hire a band, you could do a lot worse than **THE LAZY COWGIRLS**. They play greasy, raw, hard-driving-rock at stun volume with bits of the Dolls, Ramones and Heartbreakers thrown in to add flavor. These are the sources I think they're tapping on their aptly named **Tapping The Source** (Bomp Records PO Box 7112 Burbank CA 91510) and no, there are no girls in this group.

La Muerte (great name) can't decide what they want to be when they grow up: a Gothic metal band or yowling industrial noisemakers. Either way, they're pretty entertaining but on their debut LP, **Death Race 2000**, it's as white noise mavens that they score their highest marks. Check out *I Would Die Faster* or *Killing Is My Business* with their tortured caterwauling vocals, jackhammer rhythms and metallic guitar scratchings; it doesn't get more twisted than this. Unless your listening to **PIGFACE's Gub**. This band, fronted by drummers Martin Atkins of Killing Joke and Bill Rieflin of Ministry and featuring yowling yahoos from a number of industrial thrash groups has enlisted Steve Albini to produce some kind of white noise masterpiece. Placing the savage, tribal poundings of Rieflin and Atkins firmly in the foreground, Albini adds electronically distorted vocals, sqwaks and bleats of synthesizers, industrial sounds, feedback and druggy, distorted guitar work. The highlights of the LP are in the more, uh, accessible pieces like *Suck* and *Tailor Made* with their mid-tempo funk grooves. Noisemeisters will prefer the trio of songs that close the album in a blur of high pitched frequency whines, incessant pounding and buzzing and feral, muttered vocals. Goddamn!

Former guitarist of the mutant Chrome, **HELIOS CREED** has released a new one called **Boxing The Clown**. It's an unusual mix of punk metal thrash and guitar-bass drone overlaid with psychedelic flourishes and stinging fuzz-guitar workouts. Helios' limited and inexpressive voice has wisely been filtered and mixed down giving it a hoarse and menacing quality heard to best advantage on hyperactive rave-ups like *Hyperventilation* and *Got Me Floatin'*.

Bill Leeb, formerly of Skinny Puppy has released three great LPs with his band **FRONT LINE ASSEMBLY**, and now with **Caustic Grip** you can make it four. This is ominous, deathly serious industrial dance ditherings overlaid with impassioned mutterings, sampled voices, eerie, floating melodic lines, and a variety of agitated percussive effects. What lyrics can be deciphered seem to be the usual mix of anomie and paranoia fueled ululations found in Wax Trax bands, but what makes FLA so unusual is the fact that they are able to compose forboding tunes with such memorable hooks. There are only eight cuts here, but they're all winners especially the ass-kicking *Resist*, and the dance floor smash *Iceolate* with its false stops and starts and dissonant synth work. Labelmates **FRONT 242** also mine the same vein but their creepy soundscapes and goose-step rhythms would never cause anyone to confuse them with the aforementioned band. This is dance music for a horror movie: morbid synth loops, echoed, ethereal voices, screams fading in and out of the mix and hoarse germanic croaks passed off as vocals. Imagine a cross between Clock DVA and Tangerine Dream and you'll get the idea. It's an aesthetic that works about half the time yet when it does, as on the fast and furious *Trigger 2* or *Neurobashing*, it's delightfully dolorous.

Break out the hash pipe and the cheap wine, **THEE HYPNOTICS** are back with their newest, Detroit Sound homage, **Come Down Heavy**. Heavy is the word for this hard rock, blues tinged compendium of Stooges riffs and Mc5 sentiments with nods to Ted Nugent and The Doors. Yes it sounds like a mess and it is a mess; a mess that works however, what with Ray Hanson's tinging psychedelic guitar work, James Jones sonic vocal moan and the impenetrable wall of sound created by some adroit mixing. This group, if it ever hits big, just might make getting fucked up in public fashionable again.

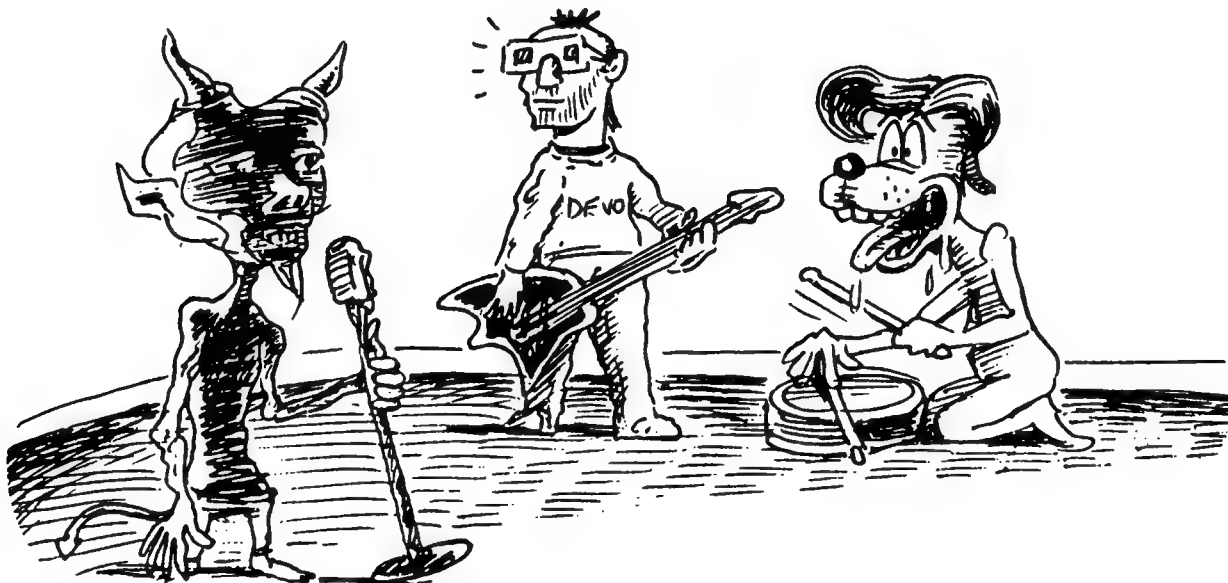


Here's an interesting question. What do 11th Dream Day, Stone Roses, Thelonus Monster, Field Trip, Das Damen, Died Pretty, Galaxie 500 and Buck Pets have in common? No, it's not laughable band names; it's the fact that all of these groups have been described by the rock press as sounding like the Velvet Underground although none of them bear the slightest resemblance to that seminal band. England's **PERFECT DISASTER** on the other hand, have obviously been listening obsessively to the Reed and V.U. songbook. Riffs and chord progressions are blatant imitations of the Underground's latter work. The sonic attack of Dan Cross' guitar solos is clearly based on the strategies employed on *White Light*, *White Heat*. And lead singer and rhythm guitarist Phil Parfitt sings and plays as close to Lou as is humanely possible for a Limey. Their newest, **Heaven Scent**, continues their practice of mixing infectious three chord assaults suffused with echoey, feedback drenched guitars against a cacophonous curtain wall of noise and disquietingly serene mood pieces in which Parfitt's odd, tenebrous lyrics are given full play. Nine great cuts on the LP, four bonus cuts on the CD including the wailing rave-up and crowd favorite, *Bluebell*. People may be tired of Lou Reed imitators but since Lou himself isn't doing it anymore someone has to.

Fuck that silly disco group Enigma with their *Sadness*, if you really want to hear somebody making inventive dance music utilizing Gregorian chants - and a whole lot else besides - listen to **BORIS MIKULIC'S Heresy**. This is dark and nasty music; a Gehenna of electronic keening, frenzied disco and hardcore beats, corruscating guitar licks, distorted vocals and deranged voice samples. One critic described the sound as a mix of Motorhead and KMFDM and while somewhat accurate, it must be viewed more as a starting point because nothing either of those bands has composed begins to approach the hardcore electronic thrash of *Hurt*, or the ominous funk of *Diana*, in which a filtered voice repeatedly screams, "You're gonna die," while

a woman noisily and lubriciously climaxes in the background. Mikulic's work first saw the light of day with the band *Sotto Voce* with an LP called *Tracks*. The songs on the album were, according to Boris, numbered not titled and placed in random order. (Well what do you expect from a guy who didn't learn to speak until he was twelve.) Unavailable in the U.S., it is nevertheless highly recommended.

As we go to press, many of you may be wondering whether the nine-CD, 244 track **STAX/VOLT** singles collection is worth its hefty ninety-nine dollar price tag. Wonder no more, this compendium of gritty, southern urban soul is essential listening. As if a set comprising all the A-sides as well as select B-sides released by this legendary Memphis company wasn't enough of an inducement, the **STAX/VOLT** thang has the benefit of having been remastered in pristine mono so as to fully capture the low end frequencies. There are surprisingly few stinkers here (Fleets, Nick Charles, Mad Lads), with most of the disasters appearing on the first volume, which documents the years 1959 through 1962, a period which found the label struggling to define its sound. Much of this stuff will be familiar to R&B aficionados: the gruff rasp of improvisational genius Otis Redding, the sweet soul stylings of Carla Thomas, the manly swagger of Sam & Dave; but how many fans of black music are truly in touch with the funky playfulness of Booker T, the nasty, surly, slap-dick beltings of Rufus Thomas, the powerful, impassioned moan of Eddie Floyd, the regal, gospel-tinged balladeering of William Bell. Then there are the unknowns and lesser lights like Mable John, Ruby Johnson and Otis Mack, who provide the frisson that comes from an initial exposure to fulgurating, transcendent performance. I could go on and on forever in this vein but I will conclude with this simple exhortation: **BEG, BORROW OR STEAL; SELL YOUR BODY ON THE STREETS IF YOU MUST, BUT GET YOUR GRIMEY LITTLE PAWS ON THIS SET. NO SACRIFICE IS TOO GREAT.**



The Director's Chair



Wild At Heart (d) david lynch (1990)

David Lynch's latest film won the grand prize at the Cannes Film Festival and then took a pasting by the critics when it was released domestically. I, for one, fail to see what all the breast beating was about. So the picture isn't as good as *Blue Velvet*. Do you stop reading Dostoyevsky because *Raw Youth* isn't as fascinating a read as *The Brothers Karamazov*? Of course not. Yet it seems that film fans and scholars are willing to write Lynch off merely because *Wild At Heart* was not the grand cinematic statement they expected. Instead they got this demented road picture, an insane revisionist version of *The Wizard of Oz*. And while its no masterpiece, its not a bad way to spend a few hours. After all, its not that difficult to make a decent road picture. Just hastily sketch two eccentric characters as the leads, have them mouth a few non-sequiturs occasionally, and make damn sure they get into some strange situations involving even more eccentric characters. Lynch gives us the eccentric leads with Sailor (Nicholas Cage as a brain dead i.e. post 1960 Elvis) and Lula (Laura Dern as the vagina), the deadpan, throwaway lines, and bizarre adventures, but he wastes too much time on Lula's mom (Dianne Ladd) and her wicked witch of the west shtick as well as her efforts to bump off Sailor; it throws the film off balance. Nevertheless, *Wild At Heart* is worth watching if only for the performance of William Dafoe as a white trash psychopath who is so memorably sleazy you'll feel compelled to take a bath (and brush your teeth) after the film is over.

Eyes Of Fire (d) avery crounse (1985)

The Shawnee believe that when the blood of innocent souls is shed in a place, an evil spirit is spawned. A spirit that must, in turn, shed blood if it is to survive. No one willingly ventures into such haunt, to do so is to invite certain death. For the Shawnee, there is little chance of accidental trespass; the entranceway to the benighted realm has been strewn with thousands of white feathers. Into death's dream kingdom passes a small band of settlers and shortly thereafter, all manner of strange things begin to occur: misshapen faces form on the tree trunks, the clouds spit pieces of skulls and bones, and naked, gray ghosts run through the open fields. Writer-director Crounse has little interest in character or plot. What he seems bent on achieving is atmosphere, the fabrication of an ominous milieu that gradually transmogrifies from the disquieting to the horrific. A still photographer by trade, Crounse effectively employs all manner of cinematographic tricks toward this end: brief bursts of ghastly imagery - shock cuts really - of demons with burned faces and glowing eyes; time-lapse and infra-red photography; colored lenses; double exposure; interchange of soft and deep focus within the same shot. *Eyes Of Fire* is not for everyone; it takes its time weaving its spell. Those patient enough to wait will be rewarded with a work of baleful beauty, unflagging inventiveness and dark power.

Deadbeat At Dawn

(d) jim van bebber (1988)

This incredibly violent flick was directed, edited and scripted by its star, Jim Van Bebber. Supposedly slapped with an X-rating because of its graphic mayhem, **Deadbeat** was unable to find a distributor, so it wound up being released directly to video. Word of mouth has subsequently elevated **Deadbeat** to cult status among devotees of the disreputable, and it's easy to see why. For this tale of a dimwitted gang leader's efforts to avenge the death of his girlfriend is well paced, has beautifully choreographed fights, dialogue so repugnant that it curdles the blood, and graphic depictions of bloodletting involving disembowelment with golf clubs, fingers bitten off, throats ripped open by hand and much, much more. Van Bebber doesn't waste time mourning the dead either. This gives **Deadbeat** a disinterested air of brutality that makes it difficult to watch. At times the film resembles nothing so much as footage from a slaughterhouse. Still, **Deadbeat** is intelligently constructed, and if your idea of "black" comedy is having a funeral ceremony culminate with the hero dumping his paramour in an industrial trash compactor, then this is the picture for you.



Director Van Bebber calls for ACTION!

Deadbeat At Dawn

The Exorcist III

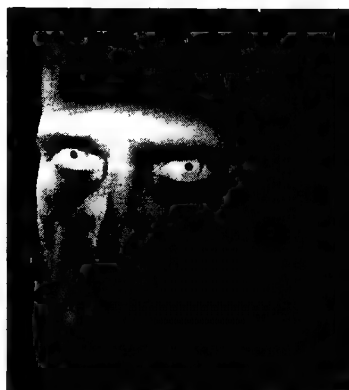
(d) william peter blatty (1990)

Everyone went to see this film expecting to see a rehash of the original and when word got out that there were no crucifix masturbation or green vomit scenes, the movie sank like a stone. Blatty deserved better, because **III** is a creepy little exercise in horror providing some of the chills of the original along with the more complex philosophical approach to the good-evil dialectic seen in Boorman's sequel (aka *The Heretic*). Blatty, as anyone who has seen the underrated *Seventh Configuration* (aka *Twinkle, Twinkle Killer Kane*) knows, is quite a capable director with a real flair for the surreal. He lights and composes scenes effectively (pay close attention to the set pieces in the killer's cell in the asylum) and here, intelligently utilizes special effects. Unlike the first film in the series, you never get the feeling that the fx are employed merely for shock value but rather for im-

parting information and increasing tension. This time out, George C. Scott is Lt. Kinderman, a D.C. cop investigating a series of gruesome homicides by someone who calls himself the Gemini Killer. When a madman in St. Elizabeth's (Brad Dourif) claims to be the murderer and provides details about the

butchery that only the police know, Scott sets up an interview. This begets a lot of Nietzschean conversations about the duality of souls and the will to power which slowly mutate from the insidious to the horrific as the

body count increases and Scott subsequently begins to see Dourif a little more clearly. Blatty, who also wrote the screenplay, wisely holds the bloodletting to a minimum, preferring to keep the focus on the battle for Scott's soul taking place in the tenebrous confines of Dourif's chamber.



Santa Sangre

(d) alexandro jodorowsky (1989)

Cult director Jodorowsky's first film in over ten years, based on a screenplay that purportedly took poor Alexandro six years to complete, is no masterpiece. It is however, an interesting melange of Freudian psychology, metaphysics, surrealism, *grand guignol* violence and cynical irony. Repeated viewings will undoubtedly reveal much more in the story of Fenix (played by one of Jodorowsky's sons), a child driven mad after inadvertently witnessing the suicide of his father Orgo, an obese circus knife-thrower and self-styled dandy.

What Fenix may or may not know (Jodorowsky never makes this quite clear), is that just prior to packing it in, Orgo, in a fit of understandable rage, sliced off the arms of Fenix's mother after she doused his genitals with acid. Not that the wife didn't have just cause, having just caught Orgo in bed with a slutty tattooed contortionist.

In any case, Fenix is locked up in an asylum where he refuses to talk, preferring instead to caw like a bird. Upon reaching manhood, Fenix's mother "calls" for him and he escapes. The next time we see Fenix, he is part of a nightclub act in which his mother sings and he plays her arms. Being this close to Fenix is not enough for the mother, she wants her "arms" offstage as well. When Fenix attempts to step out with other women she commands her "arms" to kill.

In the hands of almost any other director such a ridiculous story could only be played for laughs. Jodorowsky is however, a talented filmmaker as well as a twisted visionary ("Maybe I am a prophet," Jodorowsky told a reporter. "I really hope one day there will be Confucius, Mohammed, Buddha, and Christ to see me. And we will sit at a table taking tea and eating some brownies."); his deranged tableaux are therefore anything but laughable, disturbing and gruesome certainly, but never laughable.

Technically, **Santa Sangre** may be Jodorowsky's most accomplished work. Unlike his other films, the camera work is effective but subdued. Jodorowsky has also taken what would normally be considered a garish palette of colors: sanguinary reds, verdant greens, burnished golds, neon blues, and lit them in such a way that their volatile effect is muted. This results in a somber, dreamy texture that perfectly underscores such strange scenes as a funeral procession for an elephant and a parade of Down's Syndrom victims sambaing through a red-lite district.

Yet perhaps the greatest accomplishment for Jodorowsky with this film is his apparent discovery of the mechanics of storytelling. There are still the wild flights of fancy, the colorful and shocking images, but here they are utilized to augment the narrative, to keep the viewer in suspense and to play on his curiosity. Jodorowsky has obviously learned a great deal from the failure of his last film, *Tusk*, a Buñuel homage that the majority of art house habitués found incomprehensible. Now if he'd just take a little more time fleshing out character and working on motivation, he'd have that oddball masterpiece he longs to make.



Orgo searches for a place to make his mark.
Santa Sangre



I Come In Peace

(d) craig r. baxley (1990)

Baxley directed the dreadful *Action Jackson* but he has atoned for that with this amusing and fairly well paced film. Dolph Lundgren (the big Russian bully from *Rocky IV*) stars as a cop on the trail of an alien who is injecting innocent humans with heroin he has stolen from the mob and then removes the endorphines produced with what looks like a cross between a weed eater and a roto-rooter. Complicating Dolph's life is an alien cop who is wreaking havoc on the city in his attempts to snuff the evil extraterrestrial and the mob who thinks Dolph is the one stealing its dope, not to mention the fact that Dolph has no idea why endorphines are important to aliens. It turns out that drug addicted spacemen get off on this stuff, but before Dolph discovers this and offs the alien addict, he has to waste hired guns, karate kick cops (Lundgren has a black belt in karate), and avoid getting his throat cut by killer CDs. As in *Action Jackson*, the comic bits are incredibly puerile, but here they are for the most part unobtrusive. As B-action-adventure flicks go, this must be considered an erudite choice for a rainy Saturday afternoon.

Girl In Room 2(A)

(d) william l. rose (1975)

This film has inexplicably acquired a cult following among aficionados of European trash. It is poorly done in almost every respect and aside from a few scenes of sadism involving voluptuous nude vixens there is almost nothing here of interest to anyone. The story itself is a poorly plotted, disjointed mess. We begin with an abysmally edited sequence in which a comely lass is tortured, killed and thrown from a mountain. Suddenly we cut to our heroine Margaret who is being released from prison. She has no job and no friends, but a social worker has secured a room for her in a mansion run by a very eccentric landlady. Soon Margaret is having hallucinations involving a figure in a red mask and cape. Margaret thinks she is going mad but we learn in the course of the film that the mansion is a front for a puritanical cult that tortures and murders women it deems promiscuous (which seems to include everyone with a decent figure under the age of forty). Some of this might have been interesting if the filmmakers didn't waste so much time with exposition. Half of the movie is spent with the characters either explaining their motivations or engaging in desultory conversation which impedes continuity and vitiates any suspense the narrative might have generated. When the film finally kicks in during the final three reels, a howlingly inappropriate musical score destroys the last vestiges of credibility.

Blood Sucking Pharoahs From Pittsburgh

(d) steve tschetter (1990)

Someone is killing the young nubile of Pittsburgh and removing different body parts each time. The first victim has the top of her head cut off and her brains scooped out, another has her intestines and eyeballs removed by a high powered industrial shop vacuum. Both murders took place in public parks, but the police are unable to find a single clue, except for a witness who claims that the killer was wearing a fez. The reason clues are so hard to come by is that the investigation is being handled by an incredibly inept, not to mention idiotic, pair of detectives. Neither of them can use a gun; one because he can't stand the sight of blood, the other because he's afraid of them. With these two nebbishes on the case, the killer is given a virtual free reign to dice and slice whatever curvaceous cutie strikes his fancy. A gore comedy that actually works most of the time, **Bloodsucking** is also bolstered by a decent script that contains some genuinely clever lines and excellent sight gags which make effective use of Tom Savini's special effects wizardry. Unlike other movies in this genre such as *Blood Diner* or *Hollywood Chainsaw Hookers*, the film boasts decent direction, effective editing and some well conceived comic bits by a cast of unknown but legitimate actors. Even the incidental scenes involving peripheral characters and subplots - especially the one dealing with the detective's chain-smoking wife - are fully realized and effectively employed. Don't be put off by the purposefully inane title, this is a film that will have you laughing all the way to its blood spattered conclusion.

Don't Look In The Basement

(d) s.f. brownrigg (1973)

Dr. Stevens, who runs a tiny, dilapidated insane asylum in the deep south, believes that lunacy is nothing more than a complex series of obsessions. If these obsessions are pushed, forced to grow large and ominous, the patient will take matters into his own hands and destroy the obsessions himself. Unfortunately for the Doc, one of the patients has an obsession with an axe and so deposits said implement in Steven's head. Enter the incredibly block-headed Nurse Beall who was hired by the dead Doc. Informed as to what has recently transpired by a gruesomely made-up, obviously deranged, middle aged lady claiming to be the doc's "assistant", Nurse Beall agrees to stay on and help out, even though there are no locks on any of the rooms in the asylum not even on the axe murderer's! She stays on, although the inmates wander into her room at all hours of the night weeping and yowling and of course brandishing axes. Nurse Beall is dedicated you see and refuses to leave even when the crazies start being knocked off in all manner of gruesome ways. Hell, she doesn't even call in a locksmith. Although quite gory, *Don't Look* is essentially a comedy with no talent actors clearly encouraged to chew the scenery. In spite of this, Brownrigg still manages to invest the proceedings with an unbelievable air of seediness and claustrophobia. Extreme close-ups of every pock-mark, wrinkle and facial deformity of his loathsome cast are juxtaposed with off-centered, low level shots of them. The camera is purposefully allowed to rest on bare walls, empty hallways and the few simple sticks of badly designed furniture. Shopworn sounds of solo harpsichord, flute and primitive percussive effects (is that someone banging on a radiator?) drift in and out. Lighting is harsh, primitive, decidedly unsubtle.

A favorite of weekend late night television programmers and drive-in owners, this film is primarily remembered today for its "Keep telling yourself it's only a movie" campaign utilized by its distributor to capitalize on the success of Wes Craven's *Last House On The Left*. Renters of the tape should be aware that a number of versions have been released with between seven and twelve minutes of graphic grue snipped from the original running time of eighty-nine minutes. No version that I have seen however, contains the scene where an inmate is allowed to exhume his long dead wife and make love to the corpse. Is there a *Brutarian* reader that can help me run down a copy?



Jason and Rachel search for direction
After Dark My Sweet

After Dark My Sweet

(d) james foley (1990)

Jesus! Is it only the French who can take Thompson's brutal, desperate prose and make decent movies out of it? This certainly seems to be the case. After all, Tavernier has given us Thompson's *Pop. 1280* in the form of the hilariously cynical *Coup de Torchon*, and Allen Corneau turned *A Hell Of A Women* into a fine *serie noire*. America on the other hand, has given us the messy McQueen and McGraw vehicle *The Getaway*, a botched version of Thompson's scariest novel, *The Killer Inside Me*, and in 1990 three mediocre film adaptations; *The Kill Off*, *The Grifters*, and last and certainly least, *After Dark My Sweet*. The later film is a virtual failure because of the solemn approach it takes to the material that is essentially pulp melodramas. Foley, who established his reputation as a director of Madonna videos, has apparently never read a Thompson novel. He has cast beautiful Jason Patrick and gorgeous Rachel Ward, placed the pair in a comfortable, tastefully furnished ranch house, and forced them to glumly intone their lines as if this were an off-Broadway production of *Macbeth*. Did I read the wrong book? Or isn't *After Dark* the story of a punch-drunk boxer and a boozy, down-on-her-luck tart who plan a kidnapping? That's what I kept asking myself as I waited for this film to slowly, oh so slowly, get untracked. It never really did, and even though two of the protagonists died, I hardly noticed. For they went, not with a bang as Thompson would have had it, but with barely a whimper.



A shunting we will go
Society

Drive-In Massacre

(d) stu segall (1976)

A better title for this would have been Valley of the Dullards since all of the characters in this LA based flick are so incredibly cretinous. First of all, we have people getting viciously cut to pieces in this drive-in every night and the theater still does turn away business. Then every character we meet is a pin-head or worse. Take the suspects for example. One of them is a janitor at this bloody pit of horror who wears alpine hats for some inexplicable reason and pines for the days when he was a carnival geek biting the heads off snakes. Another is a convicted sex offender who plasters the walls of his living room with pin-ups, and in his spare time sneaks around the outdoor theater looking into couples' cars and jerking off. When told by the police that he is a suspect, he screams, "All I wanted to do was beat my meat." Then there is the manager, an Anton Lavey look-alike who doesn't "Give a damn if half of L.A. gets chopped up," just as long as the cars keep lining up at dusk. The cops, it goes without saying, are hopeless imbeciles. They keep arresting the wrong people and even when they are on a stake-out, two people still get sliced and diced even though they are sitting just two cars away! The filmmakers also seem to be working a few cards short of a full deck but that's not an impediment; their meddling only serves to make a preposterous story even more ludicrous. Do you care? Of course not, you're renting a movie entitled **Drive-In Massacre** so its obvious you're only asking for some cheap laughs and a little of the old ultra violence whilst downing your first six pack of the night. Approached with such diminished expectations, **Drive-In** can only prove endlessly rewarding.

Society

(d) brian yuzna (1989)

It's a shame that the studios are pushing Yuzna's dreadful *Bride Of The Reanimator* because this film, released a little over a year ago, is clearly his best work. A decent mixture of teen comedy, mystery and science fiction, **Society** is the story of a young Beverly Hills adolescent who seemingly has everything going for him - riches, looks, popularity, athletic ability - yet is uncomfortable with his surroundings. Maybe its because his parents and sister who don't look at all like him seem to be inordinately fond of one another. Maybe its because his hot new girlfriend has, like his sister, the strange habit of twisting her head until her face is firmly centered between her shoulder blades. His shrink tells him that its all in his head, but then again, his parents chose his psychiatrist. When his sister's former boyfriend forces our young hero to listen to a surreptitious recording of a conversation between his parents and his sister, it finally begins to dawn on him that the reason he is alienated from his environment is because that environment is populated with **ALIENS!** Aliens who feed off human beings - a process these extraterrestrials call shunting - by sticking their hands and tongues in orifices and then pulling and sucking until the poor human is reduced to a mass of suppurating flesh. The rich feeding off the poor metaphor is rather cliché, but Yuzna effectively exploits it with his humorous approach. The spectacular special effects are saved for the last half hour but you'll hardly notice; you'll be too busy laughing and trying to figure out exactly what the hell is going on.

Driller Killer

(d) abel ferarra (1979)

This feature debut of Ferarra's makes clever use of an almost non-existent budget by effectively employing bowery locations, hand-held camera work and a cast of earnest no name actors. Standing out amidst the latter, is Ferarra himself as Reno, a tortured, starving artist who lives in a decrepit warehouse-like loft with his lover and her girlfriend. Reno is working on his masterpiece, a huge canvas of a wounded buffalo, but he is unable to finish it. You see, things just keep getting in the way. First there is his girlfriend's constant whining about the lack of money. Then there are the bills that keep piling up. Finally, there is the horrible rock band that plays until the wee hours of the morning in the space immediately beneath his. With no food, no money and a constant ringing in his ears, Reno snaps. He heads to the local

hardware store, buys a porto-vac, snaps a drill on it and begins to carve up bowery bums. Soon he's poking holes in everybody, including his art dealer, who has pissed Reno off by refusing to sell his masterwork until Reno submits to his advances. More than just a bloody slasher exercise, *Driller Killer* is an intelligent, well made film. Ferarra's neurasthenic camera movements which add a subtle air of neurosis to the proceedings and his deft use of montage, particularly during the hallucinatory sequences, are impressive achievements for a filmmaker's first time out. And the scenes with the New York artists are genuinely funny, revealing this type of pompous cretin to be the pathetic and talentless poseurs you know them to be. Having to deal with these people on a daily basis would be enough to drive even the most level headed individual over the edge. *Driller* was Rereleased with *Drive-In Massacre* when Ferarra's second film, *Ms. 45* (1980), became something of an art house hit.

The Elvis Files

(d) laurette healey (1988)

Did Elvis really join the choir invisible? Does it matter? Of course it does. Elvis was the King, the greatest entertainment phenomenon of the century who sold over one million records, made thirty-one movies and left an estate that even today generates over half a billion dollars in revenue. He matters to somebody. So if he's still alive, why did he fake his death? After all, if Elvis resurfaced and did a comeback tour, he'd probably make half a trillion dollars. The producers of this fascinating documentary believe that The Big E was a narc working hand in hand with the federal government to put away many of the world's major drug dealers. Unfortunately, the underworld found out about Elvis and put the word out that he was to sleep with the fishes. To stay alive, Elvis had to vanish. Consequently, the government staged his death and Elvis entered the witness protection program. Stop laughing! There are six hundred and fifty three FBI reports mentioning Elvis in connection with ongoing investigations involving illicit drug trafficking and dozens more involving death threats made against Elvis by mob bosses. Moreover, all the evidence relating to Elvis' death, including the coroner and police reports, have vanished. The official autopsy report, which normally averages fifty pages or more in a case like this, is a mere two pages long. Then there are the people who claim that the corpse on display was not that of Elvis. This includes a lifelong companion and member of Elvis' band who also happens to be his cousin. As for actual physical evidence of the King's continued existence above ground, I will not spoil the thrill of discovery for the viewer. I will merely conclude by saying that if Muhammed Ali admits Elvis is still alive, that's good enough for me.

King Of New York

(d) abel ferarra (1989)

In the New York of Abel Ferarra, everyone is a psychopath: gangsters shoot dozens of people on the streets and take their sweet time making a getaway; cops risk the lives of friends and family with illegal undercover operations designed to nab a single criminal; and ganglords spend their free time pissing on the bag men of their competitor or watching campy horror flicks in Chinatown movie houses. The man who puts the "psycho" in psychopath however, is Frank, a hot shot drug dealer recently released from prison whose ambition is to become the mayor of New York. And if that might be viewed by those in positions of power as a mite too unrealistic, then Frank will settle for just being allowed to run things . . . untitled. Frank's scheme involves pushing the button on all the city's drug dealers, selling the confiscated dope and, after taking a healthy cut, plowing the money back into the city's financially strapped public hospitals. In this way Frank gains money, power and prestige in one fell swoop.

As Frank, Christopher Walken is by turns charming and inexpressibly creepy. There is madness in his eyes but a twisted kind of love for his fellow man in his soul. Larry Fishburne who plays Walken's ace hit man also stands out with his manic laugh and his absurdly stylized pimp walk. Not since Tommy Udo

in *Kiss Of Death* have we seen a killer who so enjoys his work, who takes such gleeful satisfaction in killing.

It's great to see the director of cult favorite *Driller Killer* and *Ms. 45* getting millions from Hollywood corporations merely to make brutal, lewd films like *King Of New York*. With the picture's failure at the box office though, it's unlikely that Ferarra will be making films on a budget like this any time soon.

In any case, Ferarra deserves the opportunity to make more movies. He is something of an anomaly among directors working firmly in the B-movie tradition with his story telling and cinematic abilities. If we have any doubts as to the later score, we need only look at his use of light and color in interior and exterior scenes to create antipodal emotional effects. Ferarra bathes his interiors, whether bar or bedroom, in golden browns to produce a feeling of comfort and security. The exteriors by contrast are flooded with sensuous yet menacing blues and blacks. This attention to detail is just something you don't find too often in film. It's a quality that makes even the weaker efforts of someone like Ferarra - *China Girl* comes readily to mind - worth watching. How many directors can we say that about?

Love Me Deadly

(d) jacques lacerte (1972)

This shocking and genuinely repellent film about a female necrophiliac has, for some inexplicable reason, failed to develop a following. Curtly dismissed in such learned works as *The Psychotronic Encyclopedia Of Film* and ignored in most horror film guides, **Love Me Deadly** is required viewing for the jaded cineaste.

Blockhead Lyle Wagoner of Carol Burnett and Wonder Woman fame stars as the frustrated and incredibly dense husband of a lithe and languorous young blonde named Lindsey (Mary Wilcox of *Psycho Killer*). Alex's frustrations stem from his inability to consummate his marriage. Hell, he has to literally beg for a chaste kiss. Alex is virile and willing but just fails to understand that he's not suppose to move when Lindsey becomes aroused. You see, Lindsey is simply incapable of making love to anything other than a corpse! Life after marriage becomes even more complicated for her when a malicious mortician inadvertently stumbles upon Lindsey while she is getting a mite too friendly with a cadaver. Armed with this knowledge, the unscrupulous undertaker threatens to

expose poor Lindsey's secret to Alex unless she agrees to join his necrophilic cult.

What saves **Deadly** from being ordinary drive-in fare are the episodes of stomach turning depravity and the creepy, stylized performances of Wilcox and the sleaze bag playing the mortician. When you add this to the almost *cinema verite* directoral style, the result is a kind of clinical, surreal quality that indelibly sears scenes on the memory: Lindsey tenderly and helplessly mounting freshly embalmed corpses; the mad mortician elegantly and disdainfully working his ponderous embalming needles in the neck and arm of a pitiably shrieking victim; the sensual, languid movements of the death cult around one of its desanguinated victims.

Love Me Deadly is a genuinely disquieting experience. While pacing and the lumpish performance of Wagoner are irritants, they are not so obtrusive as to destroy the film's nightmarish spell. These are flaws that can be forgiven in a picture of such unnerving power.

Axe

(d) frederick friedel (1977)

A fresh corpse is about to be hacked to pieces in a bathtub. As the axe descends, there is a cut to a brain-damaged old man in a wheelchair, then a cut to a long shot of the dilapidated frame house where the dismemberment is occurring, then a cut to a pathetic oil portrait of a beaming young maiden and finally, two quick jump cuts to two men as they toss in their sleep. And all the while we hear the dull thud of the axe as it meets cold flesh. This is an illustration of the cinematic strategy employed by the creators of **Axe**, a film that cries out for a large screen. For the story of three loutish hoodlums on the lam, who unknowingly hole-up in a remote farm house with a psychotic adolescent girl, is told primarily in cinematic terms. Composition, montage, oblique camera angles, symbolism: all are employed at the expense of traditional narrative devices. The result is, in spite of the evident budget constraints, a work that both disturbs and provokes. Moreover, the effectiveness of **Axe** is not an accident. The sparsity of dialogue, minimalist plotting, simply drawn characters, and abbreviated running time, betray a purposeful design.

Axe also effectively utilizes its synthesized sounds to create and underscore mood. Eerie, melancholic strains presaging scenes of violence give way to sluggish, somber, distorted passages following the denouement. Incidental themes are primitive and disturbing.

Because of its title, viewers will come to this film expecting to see a ghastly slasher exercise. If they are intelligent and attentive, they will instead experience something akin to a disquieting dream. A dream that is all the more disturbing because it seems to take place in a world that for some inexplicable reason, doesn't quite resemble our own.

The Silence Of The Lambs

(d) Johnathan Demme (1990)

Johnathan Demme has taken a feverishly vile and suspenseful novel about serial killers and made a tasteful, measured and elegant film out of it. *Silence* is an entertainment for sophisticates: those who think violence is disagreeable and who would never be caught dead at a horror film, which isn't surprising given Demme's track record. This is the man who made *Married to the Mob*, *Melvin and Howard* and *Something Wild*; his métier is light comedy and social satire. Choosing him to direct this picture was like asking Ernest Lubitsch to handle *Psycho*. You would wind up with an intelligent, interesting movie no doubt, but let's face it, a twisted subject calls for a twisted sensibility. Demme is far too well-adjusted for this material and so what he has given us is a film long on dialogue and short on action - an earnest psychodrama centered on a battle of hearts and minds between Jodie Foster, an FBI agent on the trail of a loathsome murderer, and Anthony Hopkins, the incarcerated psychopathic cannibal killer Dr. Hannibal Lecter, whose help Jodie desperately seeks.

Accordingly, the two most exciting scenes in the book, Lecter's escape and Foster's climactic battle with the serial killer are here conceived and executed in such a perfunctory and lifeless manner that they are virtually devoid of suspense. In fact, you get the distinct impression that Demme is more concerned with arty camera angles and somber lighting effects. *Silence* is rescued from its self-conscious cleverness however, by Anthony Hopkins who turns in a *tour de force* performance. Conveying charm, intelligence and a quiet menace, Hopkins never attempts to call attention to himself. Yet, we simply can't help noticing the slightly mocking smile playing at the corners of his mouth, the unwavering gaze, the almost impossibly erect stance, the eerily calm, passionless diction; and the more we notice, the more frightening Hopkin's conception becomes. Hopkins is so good that he reduces Foster, quite a capable actress in her own right, to virtual invisibility.

The Hot Spot

(d) Dennis Hopper (1990)

Dennis Hopper's beautifully photographed *film noir* is a cinematic essay on sex. Not its destructive power exactly, although sex does claim its share of property and life here, but rather how the need for a certain kind of sex unknowingly shapes our personality and controls our destiny and how the failure to recognize these needs can lead to tragedy and madness. The man at odds with himself in *Hot Spot* is Harry Madox (Don Johnson), a thirty-five year old used car salesman who suddenly finds himself in the middle of a dusty and sweltering Texas backwater. Harry is getting what he needs in the form of a beautiful blonde rich bitch (Virginia Madsen), but what he wants is the naive town virgin (Jennifer Connelly). This tug in Harry's soul between innocence and experience is the nexus of Hopper's film, the dramatic

core around which everyone and everything revolves. Unfortunately Hopper and his scriptwriters have not fashioned an interesting character in Harry. He is rather bland and not much of a conversationalist. Still, the sexual theme is an interesting one; the acting and cinematography (Hopper's painterly eye serves him well, we can feel the heat, taste the cold green spring water, lose ourselves in the dazzling azure sky) and the soundtrack which features the music of Miles Davis and John Lee Hooker is by turns evocative and chilling. Hopper also throws in ample doses of nudity including two scenes involving oral sex that are so rapturously, deliriously erotic that we end up wondering why anyone would ever bother to engage in coitus.

BLOBERMOUTH

BY C.W. PRATHER

Over the years, Jack Harris has made *The Blob* a personal passion. First, with the success of his first feature film, the 1958 sci-fi classic *The Blob*, he helped to define American values for that time. Then, after a string of experimental failures, Harris and his son Anthony produced the miserable Larry Hagman directed sequel, *Beware! The Blob (Son Of Blob)*, in the early seventies. Years later, possibly in order to protect his story from falling into public domain, Harris updated the original for a much needed, gorier treatment. While 1988's *The Blob* was a bit on the paranoid side, it did make for a better remake than the recent *Night Of The Living Dead*. Now along oozes Harris' ultimate sell-out, **Blobermouth**, a *Blob* for the nineties that would appear to be nothing more than the original classic with new dialogue, a new story and some cheesy animation.

Which is exactly what it is, plus a little bit more.

In 1985, after a stint on the little seen *Thicke Of The Night*, a Los Angeles based improv group called The L.A. Connection found a small amount of success in syndication with "Mad Movies." Taking old films from all genres and giving them new life and direction through improved lip-synching, the show was hilarious. Not content with the small screen, Kent Skov (the leader of the L.A. Connection) approached Jack Harris (who was finishing up the yawn-fest, *The Eyes Of Laura Mars*) on bastardizing the original "classic" *The Blob*.

For the next seven years **Blobermouth** was in production, each and every frame had to be carefully gone over time and time again in order to get the new dialogue and story to flow smoothly and comically. An animated mouth was added in order to give **Blobermouth** something to speak his Henny Youngman written jokes with. Finally, after some computer enhancement and an appropriately bad song for the credits was added, **Blobermouth** was finally ready to be seen by the world.

The new story is simple enough: Steve and his best-girl, Vaccine, are parked on a hill smooching and discussing his one man show that will premiere the next evening in front of the entire town. Suddenly, something falls from space and crashes near by, so they go to investigate. However, it is Lloyd Bridges, a hermit with an obsession for squashing "widdle cwickets heads in," who discovers that the thing . . . er, I mean, *The Blob* . . . that has landed

on earth is none other than the wise-cracking **Blobermouth**; a visitor from another world with just one mission: he wants to be in Steve's show.

Steve eventually learns this after running over Lloyd with his car ("How many points, Steve?" Vaccine squeals with glee) where they meet **Blobermouth**, attached to Lloyd's arm. Afraid of what **Blobermouth** might do to his rising comedy career, Steve rushes over to Sheriff Andy Taylor to report **Blobermouth's** existence. Naturally, Sheriff Taylor doesn't care; actually, no one in the town really does because (in the spirit of Lucy and Ricky) everyone wants to be in Steve's show.

Meanwhile, **Blobermouth** rolls through town causing all kinds of mischief. He gets lucky with Dr. Hallen's slutty nurse, sings a duet with Gomer Pyle, and even wins the funny bone of Steve's babe, Vaccine, at the local 7-11. All of which is incredibly distressing for poor Steve because not only is he on drugs through most of the movie, but also he learns that if he is really good at his show he can make it to the big time: The Carson show!

The final confrontation consists of **Blobermouth** hogging the spotlight, after trapping Steve, Vaccine and Vaccine's forty-five year old, three foot tall husband, Opie, in the basement of Mel's Diner (with Mel and Alice no less). On orders approved by The Pope, **Blobermouth** is covered in whipped cream (he hates dairy products) after one bad pun too many, but the damage has already been done: **Blobermouth** has impressed Carson's people.

I said the story was simple; I said *nothing* about it making sense.

The movie **Blobermouth** is probably twenty minutes too long for the average mortal; this is a perfect example of how a little goes a long way and that a lot is often too much. It's an audience participation film for those who don't want to participate and a camp movie created from a camp movie. Worse things have happened to *The Blob* in the last thirty-three years, and as far as bastards go, this one is at least funnier and more innovative than *The Stuff*. All in all, **Blobermouth** is an amusing and sometimes brilliant work that Harris should be grateful to add to his stable of squishy titles.

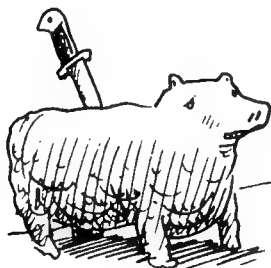
Flatliners

(d) joel schumacher (1990)

If I had known that the director of this mega-budget horror film was the guy responsible for the inane and childish movie, *The Lost Boys*, I would never have gone near the tape. But you probably already knew this and so have refrained from renting it. Don't put it off; this is an exciting and often genuinely suspenseful film. Sure, the premise of a group of pretentious medical students who kill themselves (believing they can be revived by their colleagues) so they can experience the "ultimate" trip is silly, but the screenwriters have thrown in an interesting twist.

Initially, your journey is all sweetness and light. However, the longer you stay dead, the stranger the trip gets, ultimately landing you in a nightmarish underworld where you are forced to confront the repressed guilts and fears harbored in your psyche. And if you sojourn too long in the netherworld, you're better off not waking up because your dark side takes human form and begins to stalk you. Soon you are unable to discern nightmare from reality. Pretty heavy, huh?

Schumacher has an apparent affinity for baroque set designs - check out the Egyptian deco trappings of the abandoned warehouse where the students perform their experiments and the pretentious *film noir* effects - but they work here because the characters are supposed to be walking a fine line between fantasy and actuality. The students' death trips are also visually arresting and imaginatively composed. And fine performances have been coaxed from a cast that includes Julia Roberts, Kiefer Sutherland and Kevin Bacon. The latter is particularly good as a sensitive rebel suffering from an unrequited love for the beautiful Julia.



Jacob's Ladder

(d) adrian lynne (1990)

Jacob Singer (Tim Robbins) is one weird guy. He's got a doctorate in philosophy but he works in the post office. He has no friends except for his mistress Jezebel (which spells double bubble, boil and trouble) and he hardly ever sees her because he's always working overtime at the post office. In fact, his sole companion seems to be the battered paperback copy of Camus' *The Stranger* that he carries with him everywhere he goes.

Not that Jacob hasn't tried to talk to people. It's just that sometimes these "people" turn into demons with tails or ghouls with vibrating heads. And they all seem to be trying to kill him. Naturally, you'd tend to keep to yourself after a few encounters like this. Jacob's girlfriend Jezebel (Alexandra Pena) tries to convince him that its only bag ladies and beggars he's seeing, but then her teeth shrink when she gets angry and she enjoys dancing with mutants, so her opinions can't be considered very reliable. In any event, things just haven't been quite right since Jacob suffered a bayonet to the gut in Vietnam. He keeps experiencing flashbacks about the incident but he just can't remember if he survived. Now with all hell literally breaking loose, Jacob has to ask himself: "Am I dead?"

Part mystery, part horror film, the beauty of *Jacob's Ladder* is that while you're fairly certain you know the answer to this question, you have nagging doubts right up until the final fadeout.

Beautifully, and sometimes lushly photographed, inventively but subtly filmed (which is unusual for the often histrionic Lynne) with superbly chilling special effects and lighting, this is a powerful and exciting motion picture that contains set pieces that are among the most haunting and disturbing in recent memory. If there is a weakness in the film, it is the acting of Tim Robbins who, while likeable enough, possesses little in the way of screen presence and whose conception of Jacob as an amiable dolt - someone suffering the tortures of the damned would seem a little less

focused, a little more hysterical, a little more impassioned - is clearly wrongheaded. Robbins' inadequacies are nicely balanced by the brilliance of Danny Aiello as an angelic chiropractor. Aiello is so subtly intense, so heartbreakingly real, that you wish he had taken Robbins aside and given him a few acting tips.

The Amazing Transplant

(d) doris wishman (1989)

Amazing is the word to use when talking about this film. It's the story of a shy thirty year old virgin who has his best friend's penis sewn on him in order to make him more aggressive with women. The operation has an unfortunate side effect. It seems that the owner of the transplanted penis had a thing about gold earrings and now everytime the thirty year old innocent sees a woman so adorned, he is compelled by his new schlong to rape them. I swear I'm not making this up and if you've ever seen a Doris Wishman pic then you know I couldn't have imagined the aforementioned. The absurd is Wishman's trademark and I'm not just talking about the storylines; her films are suffused with the preposterous. My notes for *Transplant* are full of large question marks over things like a perfectly enunciated confession made with hands clasped firmly over the mouth, a detective who never asks witnesses relevant questions, rape victims who know the name and the address of their attacker yet fail to call the police, and so on and so forth. I also have questions, oh so many questions, about Wishman's stylistic quirks. For example, why are shoes so important and why the need for such tight shots of breasts and asses? Do we really need to see every bump and pimple? Ah, but that's the beauty of this woman (who has been making exploitation flicks since the sixties by the way), she seems to have no idea what she's doing but she does it anyway.



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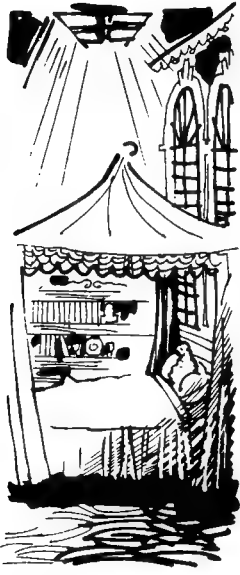
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5:00 pm

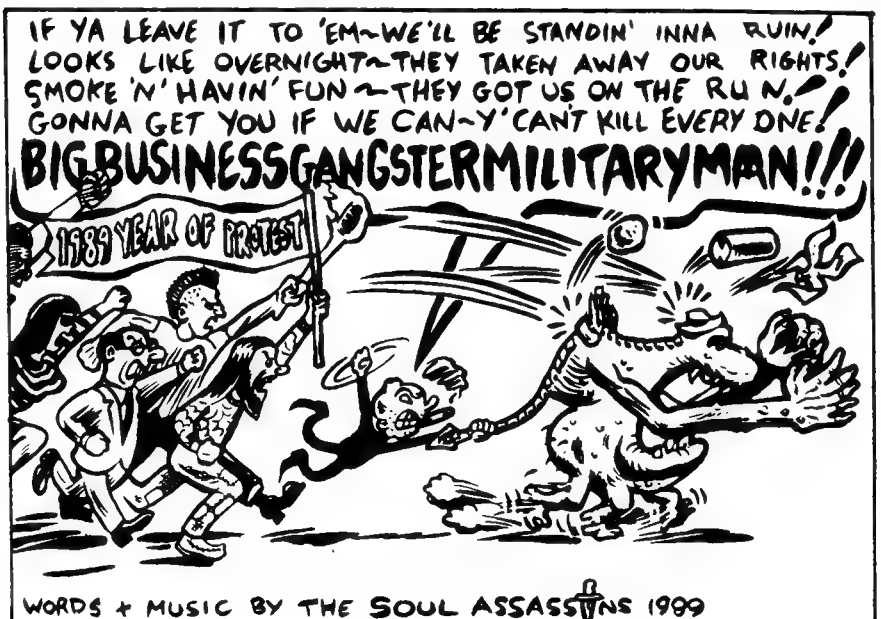
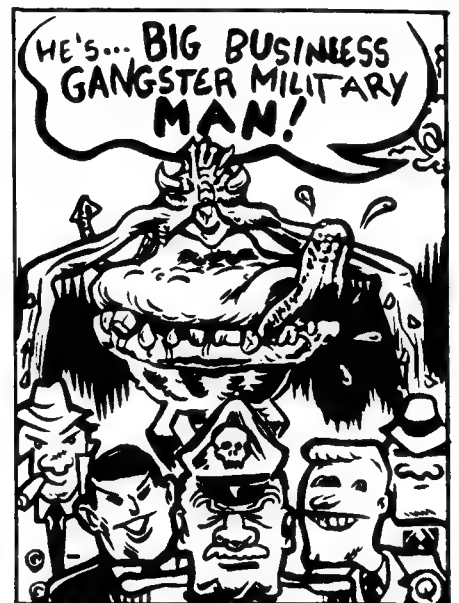


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Brutarian Contributors

Greg Goodsell is a professional writer whose work has appeared in numerous publications including **Deep Red**, **SubHuman** and **Kill Baby**.

Randy Palmer was formerly the associate editor of **Famous Monsters**. His work has appeared in **Gore Zone**, **Fangoria** and **CineFantastique**. He is currently at work on a tome about the classic horror and sci-fi flicks of the fifties.

Sally Ekhoft is an artist, graphic designer (that's her logo that graces the masthead of **Psychotronic**) and free lance writer whose work regularly appears in **The Village Voice** and **Playboy**. She resides in the oh-so-fashionable East Village overlooking the squatters settlement in Tompkins Square Park.

John (Jack) Stevenson is the publisher of and chief contributor to the incredible **Pandemonium**. His work has appeared in numerous publications. Look for him to pop up in your local Bohemian coffee house lecturing on obscure and unusual films.

C.W. Prather is a free lance writer residing in Washington D.C. He is currently at work on a novel.

Dan Snoke is also a free lance writer living in Washington D.C. He is the publisher of **Rave Sensation**, a way cool little fanzine that is the last word in these parts about martial arts and Oriental action films.

Doug Allen, painter and comic art genius, is creator of the irrepressible **STEVEN**. An expert in bricolage and alcohol consumption, he ventures out of self-imposed bucolic exile to collaborate with Gary Lieb on thousands of **Idlots**. **STEVEN** is currently available through Kitchen Sink Comics. More of Allen's work can also be found in **Blab!**

Gary Leib is a painter, printmaker, comic artist and great humanitarian. His latest work is **The Second Book of Idlots**, a collaboration with Doug Allen. The two recently had their third show of large paintings entitled **Idiotland** at **Ten In One Gallery** in Chicago.

Greg Suss is an artist living in the midwest who chain smokes Camels and drinks a lot of Jolt Cola. He recently exhibited paintings at **Venue** in Kansas City and is rumored to have been seen skulking around an immensely popular local hair salon leering at frost and tip jobs.

Flick Ford is an artist whose inimitable vocal stylings propel the immortal **Soul Assassins** to ever-increasing levels of rock carnage. His current comic strip, **Hell Date Chronicles**, is featured monthly in **Hawk**, a new men's magazine from Drake Publications.

Jarson Dysrak is an artist residing somewhat comfortably, since he's such a fucking loser, in **Hell's Kitchen**, New York. He's currently showing paintings under an assumed name at some gallery in **SOHO**.

Dom Salemi is in the process of a great becoming.

Sandy Smiroldo is the galvanizing presence behind the final product you have just perused. She is quickly learning to make a friend of **Horror**. **Horror and Moral Terror**.



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Editor in Chief